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INDIA TODAY
1991 Nov-Dec

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Cinema Turns Sexy

Hindi cinema is getting positively steamy with a band of New Young Things crowding tinsel-town. This breed of dare-bare guys-and-dolls is shedding its clothes and inhibitions at the whirr of a camera. And as hot winds blow from the south, romance is becoming increasingly physical.

COVER STORY 50

Tremor of Destruction

In less than a minute, the Uttarkashi earthquake ravaged 250-odd villages, killing more than a 1,000 people and flattening over 30,000 houses. As relief teams grapple with the disaster, the death toll keeps rising, reducing the word death to a cliche. A report on the tragedy.

SPECIAL REPORT 22

A Fresh Furore

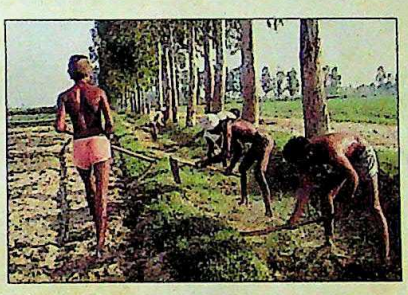
The VHP has struck again in Ayodhya. Work has started on the proposed Ram temple with the demolition of two Hindu shrines near the disputed mosque. With an eye on the forthcoming by-elections, the BJP Government in the state has lent support by taking over a part of the area.

SPECIAL REPORT 35

A Suicidal Course

With the endless feuding among its leaders and its organisation in a shambles, the Janata Dal is hurtling towards self-destruction. Now that its Mandal weapon is blunted and its Bihar citadel breached, the party appears completely incapable of posing a challenge at the national level.

SPECIAL REPORT 41



Fettered but Free

In an unusual experiment, thousands of criminals live in the relative freedom of an open jail, outside the claustrophobic confines of a closed prison. Spread over sprawling fields and plantations, there are no walls or sentries in these jails, allowing the prisoners to live normal and reformed lives.

PHOTO FEATURE 78

Lessons From Sharjah

With its much-vaunted batting line-up, the Indian cricket team was expected to break Pakistan's stranglehold on the three-nation Wills trophy at Sharjah. But displaying a degree of immaturity, it managed to squander a glorious start, crumbling under pressure. An on-the-spot report.

SPORTS 138

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Are you free this weekend?

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HOPING FOR SUCCESS

Indian cricket is in for an exacting phase ("The Coming Bonanza", October 31). The jampacked season is a kind of litmus test for our team to demonstrate its talent and revise its rating in world cricket. Let's hope that they take up the challenge and make it to an all-time high.

Ludhiana — NAMITA MANNAN

■ The Indian team with a battery of run-rich batsmen seems capable of repeating its 1983 World Cup performance. And the youngsters in the team like Sachin Tendulkar should give the galleries good value for their money. Indians everywhere will be pitching for them.

New Delhi — R. KHERA

FACING REALITY

The shocking revelations of our economic and political standing in the world ("How the World Sees India", October 15) should provide us with the much-needed jolt to pull us out of our golden heritage cocoon.

Hyderabad — ALI AZAM

■ The grim reality is that India has a precarious position in the international arena. It is high time the people's representatives woke up from their reverie, and took a pragmatic approach towards salvaging India's tarnished image.

Bhubaneswar — P. PURKAYASTHA

■ The story is an eye-opener for those among us who build castles in the air about India's image abroad. Putting up a facade of false pride will not help.

New Delhi — HASAN ZIA

■ Did you really believe that hard-headed representatives of western companies would be willing to dilute their overall corporate bargaining position vis-a-vis India by admitting that this country is important in their scheme of things? Yet, the ease with which India negotiated loans for several billion dollars is sufficient proof of her global significance.

Northampton, US — ANSHUMAN PRASAD

■ Now we know not only what others thinks of India but also where India actually stands in the world today. And it is really sad to see that it stands nowhere.

Calcutta — MANAV JALAN

INDIVIDUALISM, NOT ILLNESS

The BJP does not suffer from any split personality syndrome as alleged by the report ("Saffron Schizophrenia", October 15).

Our problem has not been a lack of strong batting line-up, but middle-level collapse. So, a lot depends on Azharuddin, Sachin and Manjrekar.

Chandigarh — DEEPAK SHARMA

Our bowling too has improved. Medium-pacers Kapil, Manoj Prabhakar and J. Srinath and spinners Shastri, V. Raju and Anil Kumble can bowl any side out.

New Delhi — USHA UPPAL

VOLUME XVI NUMBER 21:
FOR THE FORTNIGHT NOVEMBER 1-15, 1991

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Different people in the party may have different opinions on each subject.

Quilon — B. MURALI

■ The story holds the BJP responsible for the migration of the Nawabganj Muslims. Then why aren't the Muslims held responsible for the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus condemned in a similar manner?

Nagpur — KIRAN KUMAR

■ It has been incorrectly stated that Jaswant Singh is the MP from Jodhpur. He is the MP from Chittorgarh.

Jodhpur — RAHUL MEHROTRA

EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES

The land grabbed by Devi Lal and family is astounding ("The Great Grab", October 15). No ordinary person could ever dare to do such a thing. But it is easy for someone who has been deputy prime minister twice. And these are the people recognised as great national leaders.

Bangalore — G. CHANDRASEKHAR

■ Devi Lal has fulfilled the one great ambition of every politician—providing for the third generation.

Delhi — A.S. BERAR

SHOCKING SITUATION

I was horrified to read that the women of Aruvacode have been forced into prostitution ("Body Business", October 15) due to economic hardships. What is more shocking is that the menfolk of the families are acting as pimps for their mothers, sisters and daughters. One must seriously consider the potential problems arising from this, the most important, of course, being the spread of AIDS.

Bangalore — C.R. NAGENDRA

■ We all must think of ways to improve the stagnant economic condition of our tribals and villagers that leaves them with no other option but to convert their homes into brothels.

Siliguri — SONTOO PALCHOWDHURY

■ Dr E.K. Ummer is quoted as saying that almost 99 per cent of the women carry syphilitic viruses. But syphilis is caused by a bacteria and not virus.

Bombay — CHETAN DESHPANDE

TRAUMATIC PUNISHMENT

It is reprehensible that the teachers of a Delhi school forced students to strip to recover stolen money ("Shock Waves", October 15). And equally ridiculous that the principal allowed this to happen. The

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authorities should have adopted less harsh methods to find the culprit.

Kurnool — P. SIVARAM PRASAD

NO JUSTIFICATION

The guest column was thought-provoking ("Rites of Inequity", October 15). But Sadia Dehlvi seems to have adopted a defensive attitude by saying that Ameena's fate is no different from that of the Roop Kanwars and Kamalas. Two wrongs don't make a right.

Bombay — YESHWANT KARNIK

■ The article was interesting. Dehlvi has tried to reason out Ameena's parents' need for selling her. But giving an economic justification for such a grave social malady is most despicable.

New Delhi — Y.K. GUPTA

■ Dehlvi deserves appreciation for dispelling ignorance among people about Islam. In fact, Islam was the first religion to advocate the rights of women. Therefore, relating Ameena's case to religion is blasphemous and a glaring example of male chauvinism in India.

Jabalpur — SHAMIM ANSARI

■ It is indeed pathetic that in a country that worships the Mother Goddess, women are treated as saleable commodities and discriminated against from before their birth. Strong measures must be taken to stop such inhuman practices.

Rourkela — ANJANA SINHA

EASY WAY OUT

The trouble for the old ("The Greying of India", September 30) begins with the advent of bad health, the loss of a spouse and of friends. The only way out of such a situation seems to be euthanasia, which brings a quick, easy and painless end.

Bangalore — A.S. RAWAT

■ The old are a symbol of our culture and heritage. No matter how high we rise or however rich we become, we should never forget our parents. If we do, ours will become a shallow society. The worship of God is meaningless without the worship of your own parents.

Jodhpur — R.D. SINGH

■ Old is no longer gold, a logical consequence of the age of science. The emphasis now lies on the future. Children have become more important than their parents. But there should be no regret about this. The trend was set by those who are old now.

Indore — N. SACHDEVA

Anna Hazare's endeavour to realise Gandhiji's dream of self-reliance for villagers and the uplift of women should be applauded. We should be proud to have him living in our midst.

Visakhapatnam — SURYA LAKSHMI

We need more Anna Sahebs to set things right with simple intelligence, selflessness and determination.

New Delhi — ANJLEEN

BITTER MEDICINE NEEDED

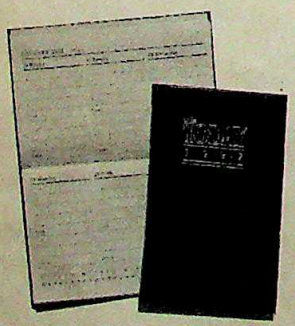
Perhaps it is time to give the terrorists in Punjab, Kashmir and Assam a taste of their own medicine ("Expanding Turf", September 30). Why doesn't the Government establish a counter-terrorism force of its own, which can kidnap relatives of hardcore militants and drop bombs on their hide-outs?

Ranchi — S.M. ASHRAF

NO INTENTION TO HIDE

We had stated that Uma Agarwal, wife of senior IAS officer Purushottam Agarwal, had been allotted 10 bighas of land in Jaipur tehsil in her maiden name ("Shocking Scam", October 15). Enquiries reveal that though she had stated her father's name on the application form, she had no intention of hiding her identity.

—Editor



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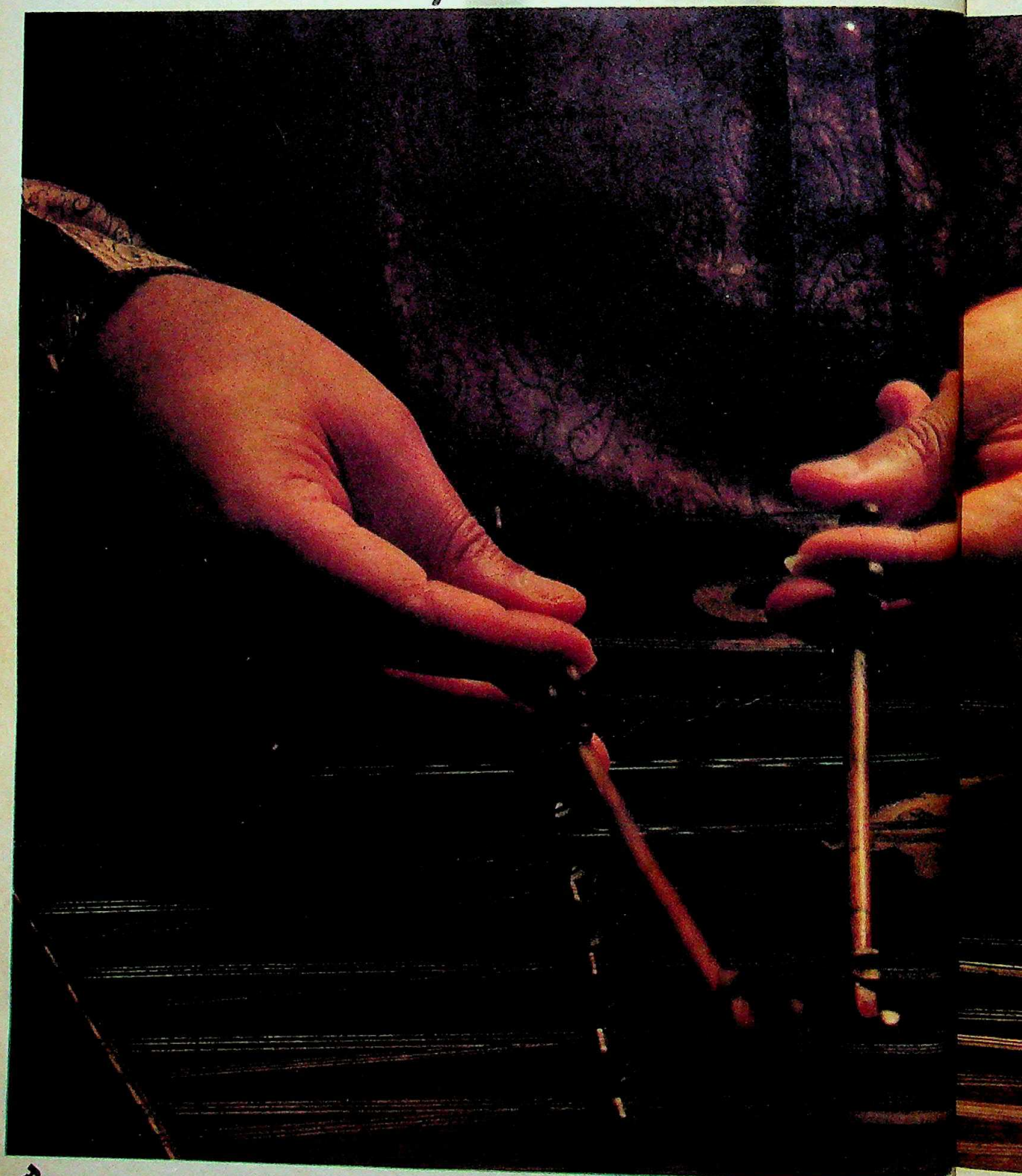

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gi of a maestro's touch
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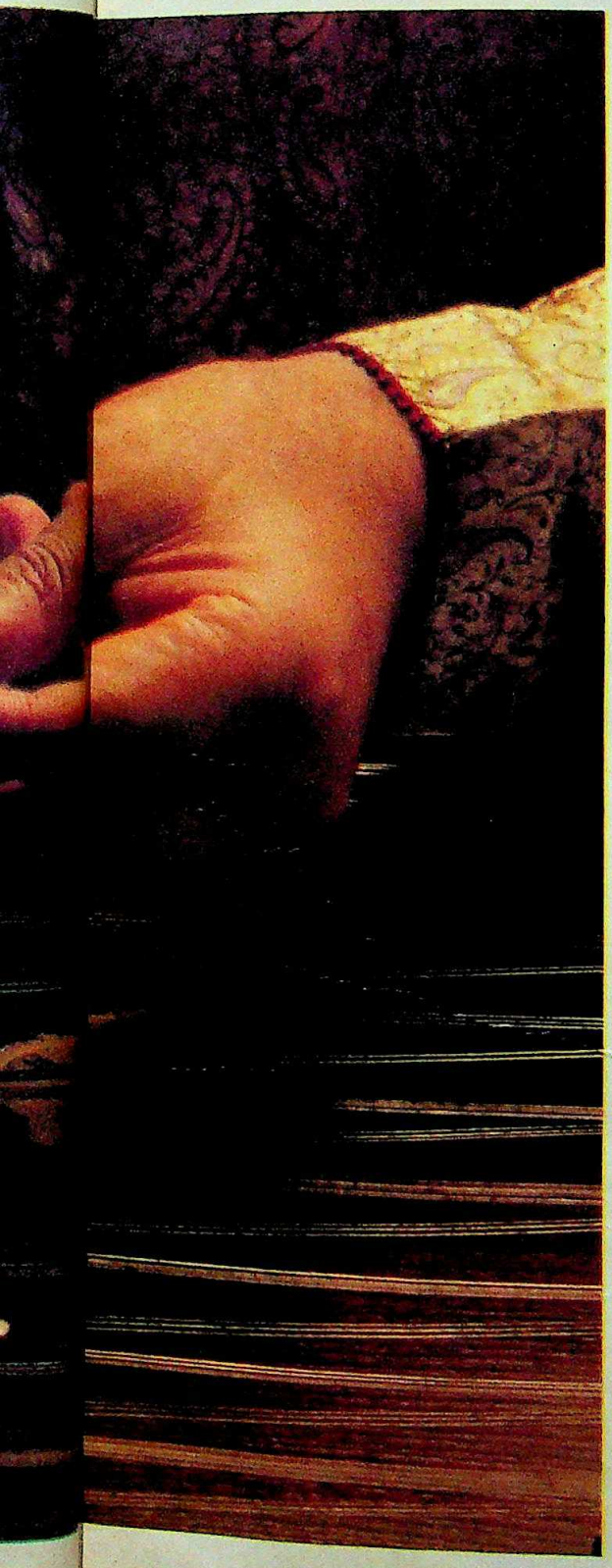
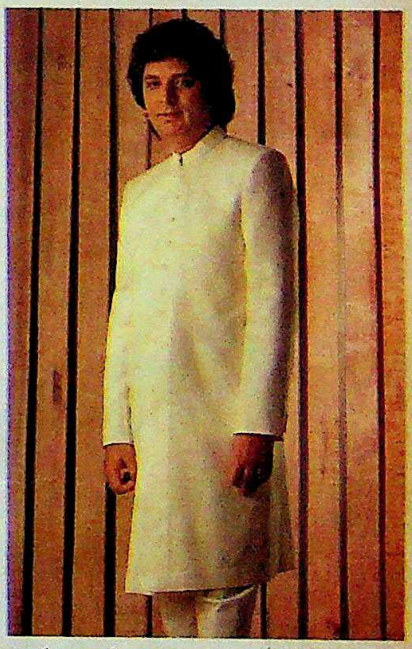


What paint and brush were to Picasso, the Santoor is to Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma — an extension of a supremely creative will. In his inspired hands, the Santoor has transcended rhythm and melody and sings to the world in the inspired language of his beloved Kashmir.



The world has, in turn, responded with accolade and honour: the Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Honorary Citizenship of the City of Baltimore, Indian Classical music's first Platinum Disc for The Call of the Valley and special performances before the House of Lords in Britain, and the Queen of Holland, Chief Guest of India's President, at the Hague.

On social occasions, when heads turn at his presence, it is certainly *not* because of his flawless sherwani which may just happen to be tailored from Raymond's sparkle polyester, wool and silk. A fabric with impeccable feel and fall, it never fails to sing the praises of its wearer.

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Act of Maturity

Illustrations by PRANAB DUTTA

SONIA Gandhi's refusal to jump into the political fray by contesting the Amethi by-election brings to an end a particularly sorry chapter in the recent history of national politics. Here was the shattered young widow of a political leader, slain so brutally, being pushed into the cut-throat world of power politics by self-serving hangers-on who, under the garb of being well-wishers, had brought such a decisive downturn in her late husband's political career. His death robbed these men, politically rootless, of their very *raison d'etre* in politics. That Sonia has finally seen through their cynical designs speaks volumes of her own maturity.

Having said no to their persistent entreaties for over four months, she has to now address herself to another vital question. Where does she go from now? First of all, she has to make it absolutely clear that her refusal to contest from Amethi is indeed an expression of her refusal to enter politics for all time to come. There is still danger of the same men continuing to run power shops in her name, influencing government decisions. Sonia must make it clear to the Government, the party and especially the glorified stenographer-typists, that from now on there will be no such thing as "Soniaji wants this done". She has seen the murky world of manipulative power games from far too close not to know the dangers in becoming an extra-constitutional power. Having lost the first round by failing to persuade her to contest, that is exactly what the so-called coterie would try to do. To begin with, Sonia must decide what kind of public posture and profile she wants to maintain. It is all right for her to receive foreign dignitaries and senior national politicians making condolence or social visits. But excessive publicity is indeed exploited by the coterie to project her as an extra-constitutional centre of power, and she must put a stop to that. The second is the question of receiving delegations of her own partymen, sundry trade unions and social organisations. She has to exercise prudence in her choice of guests and interlocutors and in what she discusses with them.

This does not mean she should become a recluse, withdraw from public life and give up Rajiv's legacy. In the Rajiv Gandhi Trust, she has created for herself just the right kind of forum. She has every right to work to perpetuate her late husband's legacy. It is the pressures to don the mantle of his power that she must avoid.

Countering Kidnappings

EVEN for a government which has allowed itself to be held to ransom by the whims and fancies of all kinds of terrorist groups, the kidnapping of the Romanian charge d'affaires in New Delhi should come as a reminder of the need to begin acting like a government with a policy. Terrorism—whether in Punjab, Assam or Kashmir—has come to stay and there is no wishing away that reality. Just as there is no wishing away the fact that kidnappings have become an easy tool in the hands of terrorist groups. Liviu Radu's kidnapping has jolted the Government into at least talking in terms of policy. Much is being made of the proposal to change the law to make kidnapping a capital offence. But as the old joke goes, if mere passage of laws could serve the purpose, the Government could happily pass legislation outlawing droughts, floods, epidemics, et al. In this case the signals that need to be given out are of tactics and strategy.

So far the government agencies have dealt with kidnappings in their own uncoordinated ways. Kashmir has seen the emergence of the freelance negotiator which has invariably led to the acceptance of the kidnappers' conditions. Punjab has been the other extreme, with the police and intelligence agencies running their own private war on the principle of an eye for an eye. In Assam, the agencies involved hold differing views.

What this conveys to the terrorist is that he is dealing with an establishment that does not know its own mind. Such an establishment is most susceptible to blackmail. Which is exactly what is happening. Terrorist use of kidnappings as a weapon is not a new tactic and the Indian Government has to learn from the vast resource of international experience. The tough stance taken by western governments over the kidnapping of their citizens in Lebanon shows that firmness ultimately pays. It also discourages further kidnappings. Governments around the world have perfected the technique of using negotiations as a delaying tactic, while all kinds of pressures—psychological, military and political—are employed to break the will of the captors. India has to learn to do that too. It has to also state clearly that it will deal with each case of kidnapping the same way, whether the victim happens to be a poor bus passenger or the offspring of the Union home minister. Only such a policy can pay in the long run. Taking hard decisions is what governance is all about.

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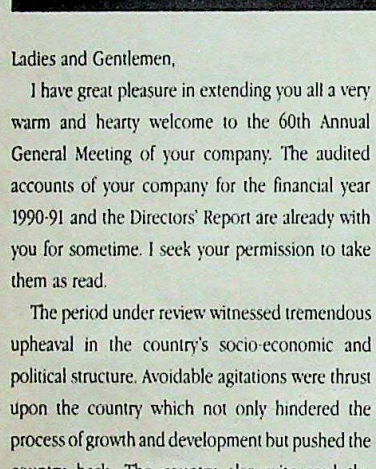
TAKING THE FAST LANE.

SPEECH OF THE CHAIRMAN MR. V.K. MODI TO THE SHAREHOLDERS AT THE 60th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT BOMBAY ON THURSDAY THE 26th SEPTEMBER, 1991.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in extending you all a very warm and hearty welcome to the 60th Annual General Meeting of your company. The audited accounts of your company for the financial year 1990-91 and the Directors' Report are already with you for sometime. I seek your permission to take them as read.

The period under review witnessed tremendous upheaval in the country's socio-economic and political structure. Avoidable agitations were thrust upon the country which not only hindered the process of growth and development but pushed the country back. The country also witnessed the unfortunate and brutal assassination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi; may I request you all to stand in silence to pay homage to his memory for 2 minutes.



V.K. MODI

In spite of the disturbances the country remained united and successfully went through the process of another general election.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Indian economy is passing through a very difficult stage due to continued pressure on balance of payments, large budget deficits and double digit inflation. These problems persisted over the past few years but lately reached dangerous levels. The situation had been aggravated by the Gulf crisis as well as uncertain domestic political situation during 1990-91.

The country has recently gone through the process of another general election and the new Government under the Prime Ministership of Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao has been installed. I must say to the credit of the new Government that without losing any time, it seriously applied itself in the management of the shattered economy of the country and has dealt with the basic issues which were hampering country's growth and development. Though, pressures on prices and inflation are inevitable in the short run because of heavy taxation, yet within 2 to 3 years further removal of controls and freeing the economy is certain to accelerate the economic development. The country would attract sizeable capital from abroad. Direct foreign investment is likely to provide access to larger capital, hi-tech foreign market, high efficiency and quality culture, culminating into a healthy competition. The Government has recently announced some long awaited policies and measures with a pragmatic and realistic approach. Abolition of industrial licensing except for a short negative list, removal of MRTP limits, relaxation of locational policy, proposals to mop up black money, automatic clearance of direct foreign investment up to 51%, foreign equity in high priority industries and liberalisation of technology transfer agreements and collaborations are the steps in the right direction.

OPERATIONS

During the period under review, the turnover including other income at Rs.209.58 crores represents an increase of 17.5% over the previous year. For the first time the turnover has crossed Rs.200 crore mark.

During the year, the company's plant produced 11,67,566 automotive tyres and 8,91,960 tubes and sold 11,58,966 automotive tyres and 8,89,393 tubes. The production could have been higher but for high incidence of breakdown of plant and machinery which is over 50 years old. The achievements on sales were restricted to the above mentioned levels.

During the period, the company earned a gross profit of Rs.763 lakhs and a net profit of Rs.530 lakhs after providing for depreciation. A sum of Rs.80 lakhs has been transferred from investment allowance reserve. The Board of Directors of your company has decided to change the method of providing depreciation from written down value method to straight line method in respect of fixed assets on the same basis as was followed prior to the financial year 1987-89. Due to the aforesaid change, a sum of Rs.575 lakhs was available. As a result of the aforesaid, the balance profit for year aggregated to Rs.1185 lakhs and after off-setting the accumulated losses of Rs.1130 lakhs, the profit available for appropriations amounted to Rs.55 lakhs. The profit of your company exceed the budgeted targets and were considerably higher during the period under review when compared to the previous year due to rigid control on costs, better management of the plant and machinery, improved product mix, better sales realisation and liquidation of finished goods inventory.

I am pleased to state that the Board of Directors of your company have recommended a dividend of Rs.0.60 per equity share for your approval. This is the first time after the company became public that, even though modest, dividend is being proposed.

EXPORTS

In spite of deteriorating market conditions in many tyre importing countries and the adverse Balance of Payments position due to the impact of the Gulf war, exports showed a marginal increase from Rs.557 lakhs (FOB) to Rs.578 lakhs (FOB) It is a matter of satisfaction that the response to the company's product range in the various countries has been encouraging.

CAPEXIL has once again awarded the "Certificate of Merit" to your company for the year 1989-90 in recognition of the company's efforts and excellent export performance.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Indian economy passing through a very difficult stage due to continued pressures of balance of payments, large budget deficit and double digit inflation.
- New Government seriously applied itself in the management of the shattered economy of the country and has dealt with basic issues which were hampering country's growth and development.
- Pressures of prices and freeing the economy is certain to accelerate the economic development of the country.
- Abolition of industrial licensing, removal of MRTP limits, relaxation of locational policy, proposal to mop-up black money, automatic clearance of direct foreign investment upto 51% and liberalisation of technology transfer agreements and collaborations are the steps in the right direction.
- For the first time turnover of the Company has crossed Rs.200 crore mark.
- The total accumulated losses wiped off and thereafter the profit available for appropriations amounted to Rs.55 lacs.
- Recommendation of a maiden dividend @ Rs.0.60 per equity share for the first time after the Company became public.
- CAPEXIL once again awards the "Certificate of Merit" to the Company for the year 1989-90 in recognition of the Company's efforts and excellent export performance.
- Availability and the prices of petro based raw materials critical.
- Company's continued thrust on R&D activities.
- The first phase of the proposed modernisation has been appraised by the Financial Institutions and formal sanction letters clearing the proposal are awaited.

RAW MATERIAL

The tension in the Gulf countries after August, 1990 and full fledged military operations in February 1991 in that area had the impact on the availability and prices of raw materials for the tyre industry almost all of which are petro based and, directly or indirectly, depend on imports. Certain fiscal measures taken by the government to face the acute foreign exchange crisis further aggravated availability of the new materials as also the price structure. Notwithstanding the difficult situation faced, your company surpassed the previous year's production level.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Your company has a Research & Development Centre duly recognised by the Government of India. The R&D Centre is undertaking research programmes for improvement in quality and minimisation of the product cost, development of new tyre design and related products, productivity increase and standardization, introduction of spin-drawn Nylon (new technology), introduction of new indigenous raw materials etc. As a result of the various R&D activities, your company has been benefitted with the development and introduction of new compounds, improvement in the performance of the existing product range, addition of new patterns and sizes, development of new raw-material and their sources and suitable modification in the product range so as to increase the exports. Your company recently decided to formulate yearly R&D budgets, and monitor the activities against the same. You would agree that this enables the management to focus attention and give the necessary push to inhouse R&D activities.

MODERNISATION

To reduce down times on account of plant and machinery being very old and to improve productivity to match the industry norms, your company has drawn out proposals for modernisation of the production facilities in phases. The first phase has been appraised by the financial institutions and I understand that the same has been well received by them. Formal sanction letters clearing the proposal are awaited. The company will take suitable steps to implement the modernisation scheme soon after the receipt of the sanction letters.

DIRECTORS

The Board had appointed Messrs. Alok Modi and Sanjiwan Sahni as Directors of the company on 30th May 1989 due to the vacancies caused by the resignation of Messrs. K.N. Modi and D.K. Modi respectively who were liable to retire by rotation. Messrs. Alok Modi and Sanjiwan Sahni hold offices only up to the date up to which Messrs K.N. Modi and D.K. Modi respectively in whose place they were appointed would have held offices, namely up to the date of the Annual General Meeting. The company has received notices from members for appointment of the aforesaid two persons as Directors of the company.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The company had harmonious and cordial relations with the employees during the period under review.

OUTLOOK FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

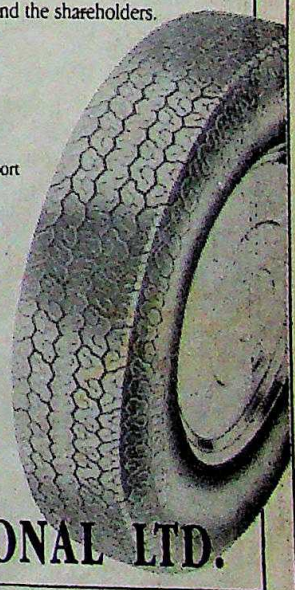
We are in a dynamic society and change is a must to survive the onslaught of highly competitive and changing market. The company has, therefore, put emphasis on improvement in quality of its human resources, plant and machinery and product by providing necessary inputs. The company is also introducing new patterns and sizes of its products to meet the changing market demands and to meet competition. This should stand the company in good stead. I hope that barring unforeseen circumstances, results of the current year would continue to be satisfactory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I place on record my appreciation to employees at all levels for contributions made by them. I also place on record my appreciation to various Central and State government authorities, financial institutions and banks for their valuable guidance and assistance. I gratefully acknowledge the support and goodwill extended by the dealers, customers, suppliers and the shareholders.

V.K. MODI
CHAIRMAN

Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.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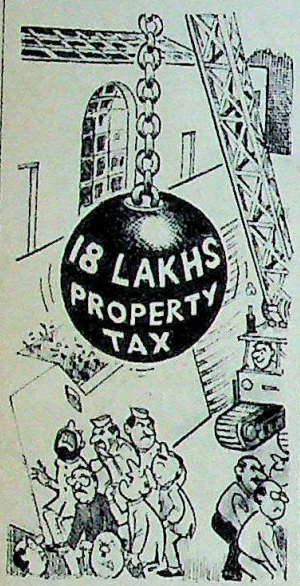
Taxing Modernity

● Modernisation costs money. The Congress(I) has realised it, even if it's two years too late. In keeping with its upmarket image, the ruling party had opted for a



five-star look for its headquarters, Jawahar Bhavan. Like Gucci loafers and Ray Ban glasses, it was a break from the convention of Gandhi caps and khadi kurtas.

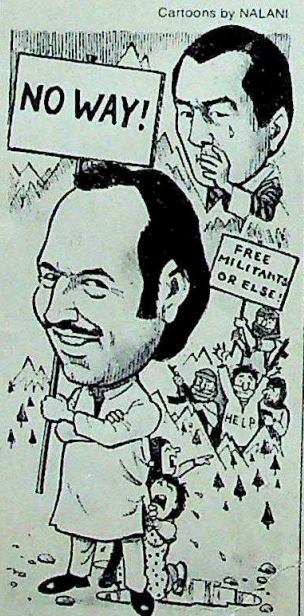
But now the bills have started pouring in. Recently, the New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC) slapped a property tax of approximately Rs 18 lakh on the party for its pricey premises. Situated on prime real estate in central Delhi, the property has naturally netted the highest tax rate. But having been housed in a government bungalow all this while and being exempt from all manner of taxes, the party bosses did not take too kindly to being reminded of their ordinary civic obligations.

So far the Congress(I) has maintained a studied silence. And the NDMC doesn't seem too hopeful of recovering the amount. When asked, an official responded: "There are so many others owing us crores. Why do you want to know about such a piffling amount?" Obviously, the authorities who rule over the capital don't want to challenge the party that manages the nation.

Gutsy Azad

● It was way above the call of neighbourly duty. While the abduction of the Union minister of state for parliamentary affairs' brother-in-law didn't seem to rattle Ghulam Nabi Azad himself, it certainly worried the King of Bhutan. Enough for him to put pen to paper and convey his 'concern' to Azad. But Azad, unlike some of his precursors, has been cool in the face of threats. In fact, he has asked the Jammu & Kashmir governor not to release any militants in exchange for his brother-in-law's freedom. All this while his wife and in-laws are under tremendous pressure. When family clashes with political fortunes, old adages about the overweening im-

Cartoons by NALANI



portance of brothers-in-law easily crumble.

Laloo's Revenge

● Laloo Prasad Yadav has a long memory. The Bihar chief minister doesn't forgive transgressions in a hurry, especially if they're by former friends. When called up

by Janata Dal Secretary-General Sharad Yadav with a request that he be allowed to attend a party rally in Patna last month, the regional strongman sounded enthusiastic. Or so thought Sharad Yadav. But when he got off the flight from New Delhi, his ego took a nasty fall. Unlike in the past, there was nobody from the party's state unit to welcome him, not even a peon. So the champion of the underprivileged had to swallow his pride and hail a cab to take him to the party office. Trounced in the last elections, the Janata Dal secretary-general chose Madhepura to ride back to Parliament. Laloo too wanted it to come through. But not before the other Yadav knew his place: which is on his knees, hands folded in supplication.

Foolhardy Family

● The whole world may be sceptical of Home Minister S.B. Chavan's claims of shortly restoring normalcy in Jammu & Kashmir but at least his family believes in him. Or so they seemed to say, much to the discomfiture of senior administrative officials in Srinagar last month. Apart from film star Rajesh Khanna, a large contingent of Chavan's family members accompanied him to the state. As is the practice with all visiting VIPs, the contingent was brought from the airport to Raj Bhavan under heavy armed escort. With the Raj Bhavan overlooking the Dal Lake, the family thought it would be a fine idea to toddle off for a

shikara ride. Especially since the surroundings looked so serene. Officials tried to argue with them, pointing out the risks, but the family members were not convinced. It was only after protracted persuasion by senior officials that the dangers were brought home to the would-be-sailors. At least there is one turbulent home territory that Chavan can control.

TAIL PIECE

During his speech at the Indo-US Joint Business Council, industrialist L.M. Thapar quipped that when US Trade Representative Carla Hills assumed office, she was known as "Atilla the Hen". The question now is: if P. Chidambaram gives in to the demands raised by Hills, will that make him hen-pecked?

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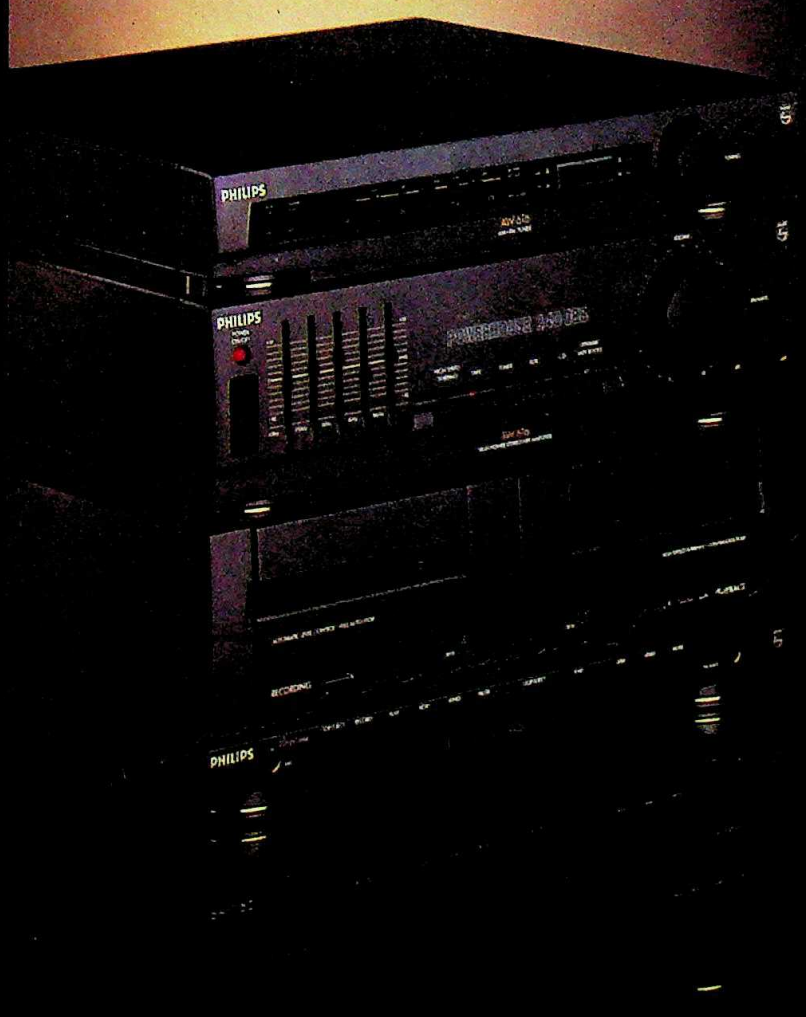

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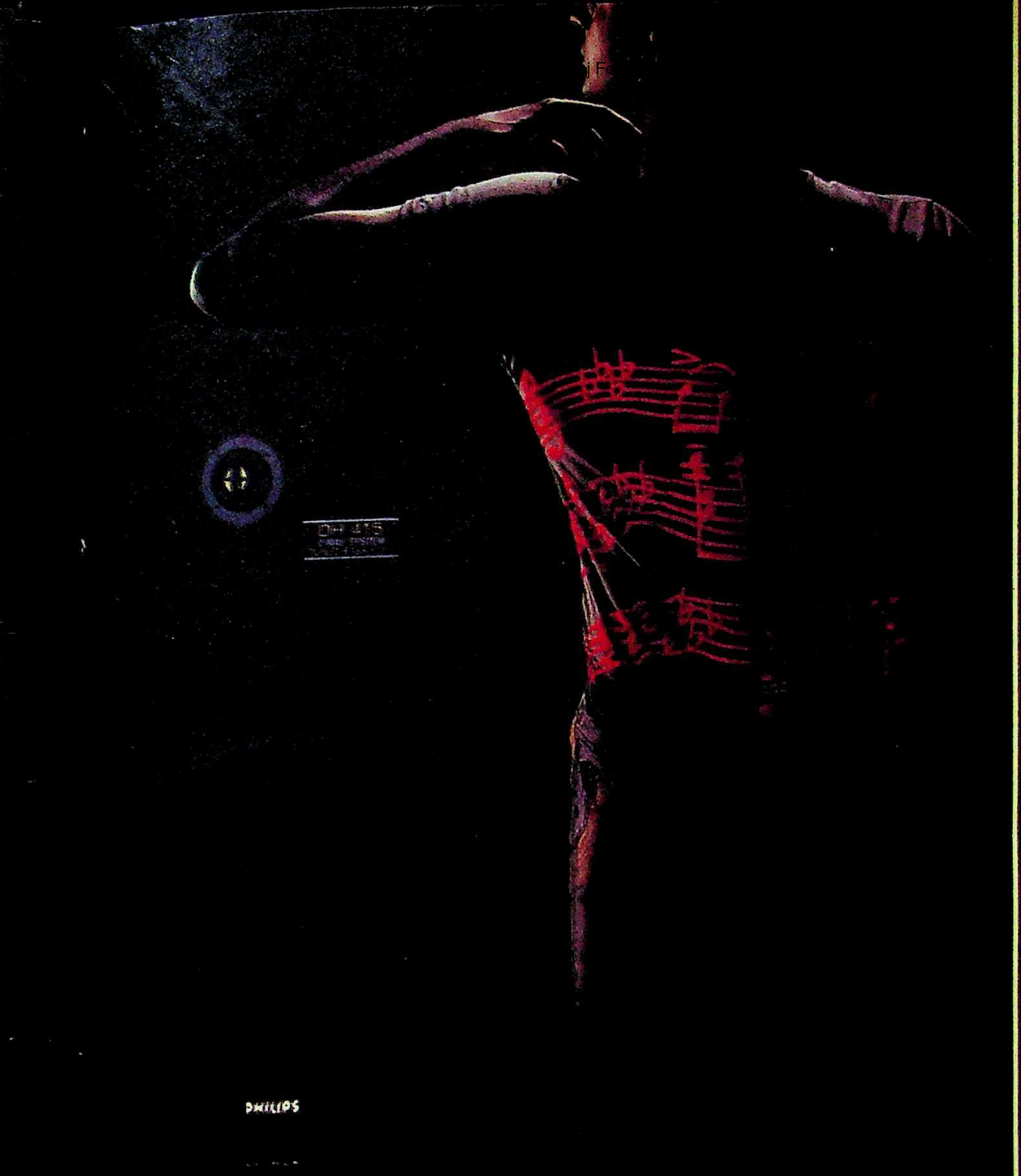

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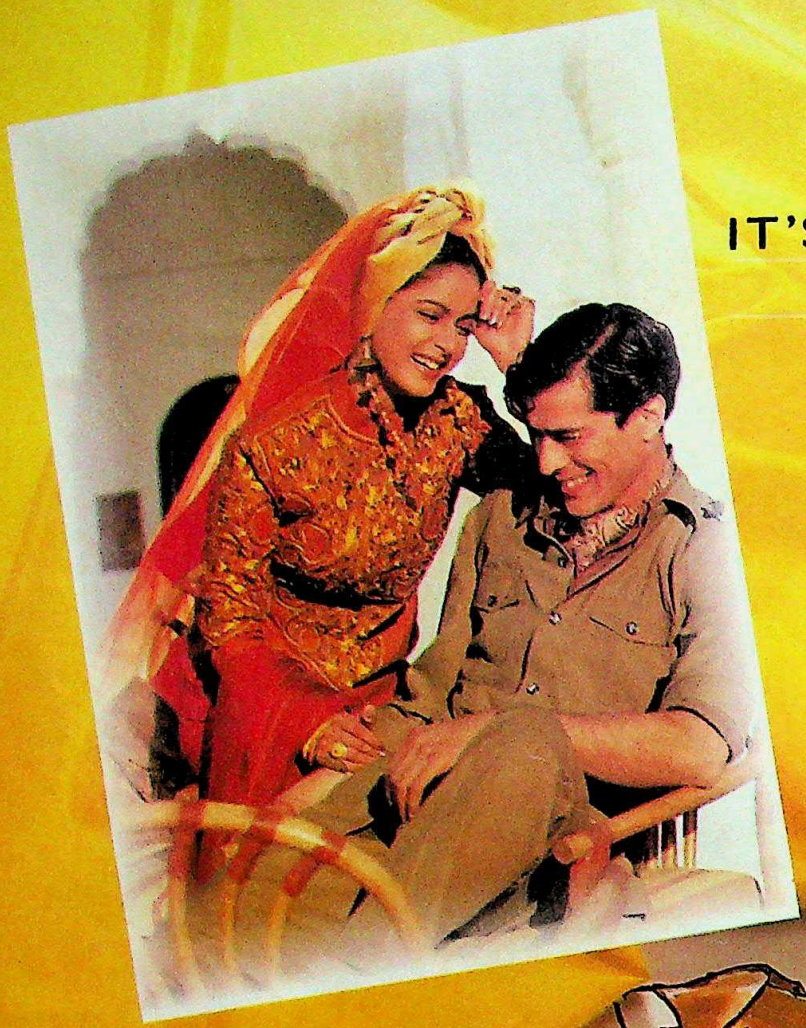

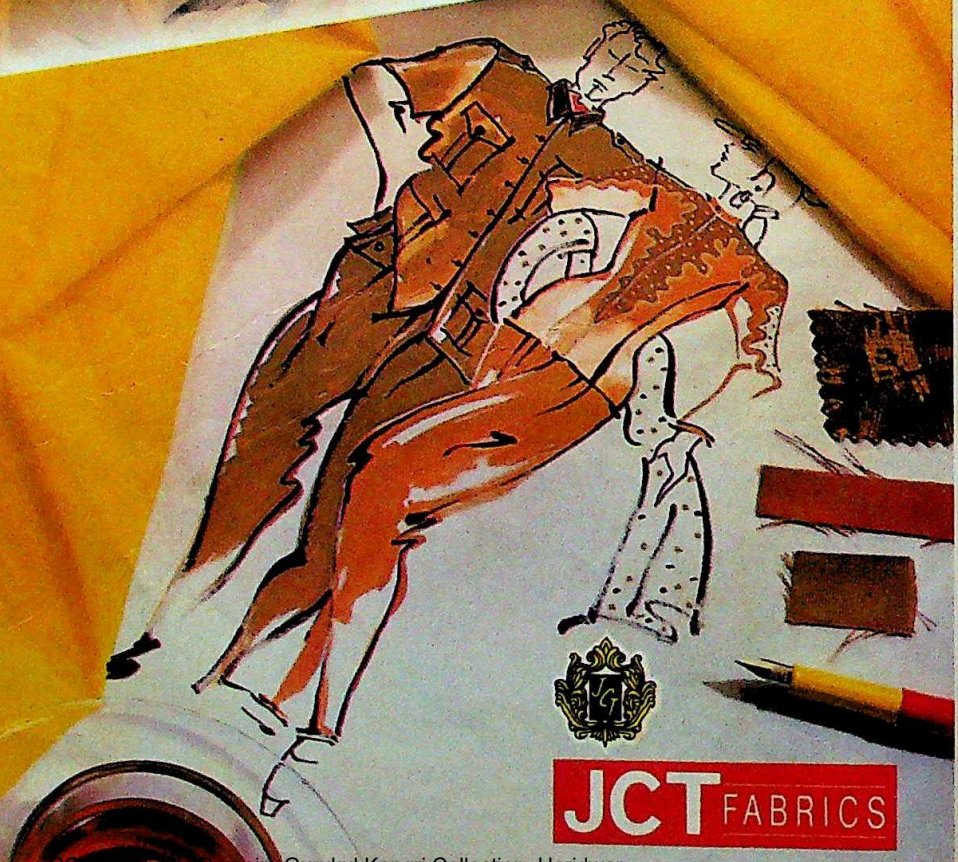

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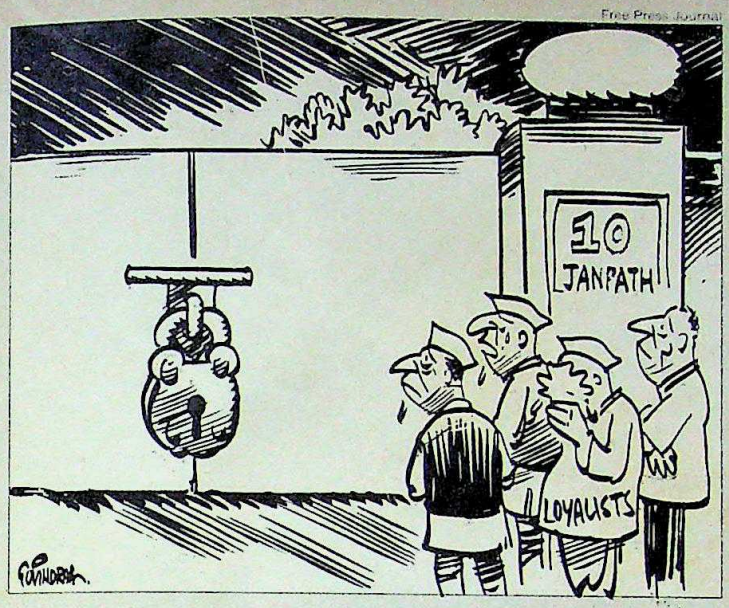

- *Even in her rejection, Sonia Gandhi has adhered to Indian culture and the country is proud of her.* ■ RATNAKAR PANDEY in *The Telegraph*

- *Politics needs good people, and I'm good.* ■ SHATRUGHAN SINHA in *The Times of India*

- *It is typical* BJP *tactics.* Ek chhote bhai ko bade bhai se lada rahe hain. *(They are making the younger brother fight the elder one.)* ■ RAJESH KHANNA, on Shatrughan Sinha's nomination for the New Delhi constituency, in *The Hindustan Times*

- *The prime minister is doing good work, why should we disturb him?* ■ BIJU PATNAIK in *The Telegraph*

- *Janata Dal is a silly experiment.* ■ V.P. SINGH in *Indian Express*

- *My party is totally sick.* ■ GEORGE FERNANDES in *The Economic Times*

- *Only fools among us would think about getting associated with the Congress(I).* ■ LALOO PRASAD YADAV, Bihar chief minister, in *Frontline*

- *We were on the same bandwagon but V.C. Shukla made it to the top, we did not.* ■ BHAGEY GOBARDHAN, Congress(I) MP, in *Surya India*

- *It hurts to see that the present team is so good. It's sad that we couldn't be like this earlier.* ■ MARK PATTERSON, Indian hockey goalkeeper who is emigrating to Australia, in *Sportsworld*

- *I sell civilisation in a jar.* ■ SHAHNAZ HUSAIN in *The Sunday Observer*

- *Mrinal Sen is a prime example of sloppy film-making.* ■ SATYAJIT RAY in *Indian Express*

- *Don't I pout like Marilyn Monroe?* ■ ANU AGARWAL in *Showtime*

- *I love you.* ■ PROTIMA BEDI, on her favourite bedroom lie, in *Savvy*

- *If it pleases some people to make fun of me, I don't have a right to deny them their entertainment.* ■ RAAJ KUMAR, in *Stardust*

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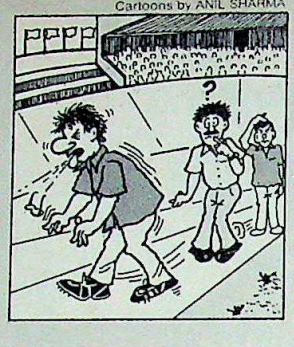
THE RAT RACE

■ It may have been the annual sports day of a multinational company but the foreign killer instinct had not rubbed off. Or maybe playing to win took a backseat to the cardinal rule of marketing: the boss—here a board director—is always right. Especially if he flies to Delhi from Bombay for the sports jamboree.



The event of the day showed the altruistic nature of the company's senior managers. The line-up for the 100-metre dash was impressive: the director, the local general manager, marketing manager and divisional manager. The general manager led, with lusty applause from the home crowd putting Carl Lewis muscle into his legs. But suddenly, just when 20 metres separated him from victory, he slowed down. The marketing manager too stopped in his tracks and the divisional manager took two steps back. And the order of the rat race lived, even as sporting spirit died.

COURTING THE COPS

■ For the trigger-nervous Delhi Police, nothing is as infuriating as a bomb-alert call which fails to materialise. Swimming against the tide of terrorism, the policemen's explosive tempers are often ignited by warning calls which turn out to be hoaxes.

But sometimes the caller overplays his hand. As recently at a police station in the capital. The calls became a little too frequent and the man at the other end a little too familiar. The crank had it coming, and he got it. When he called next time, he was chatted up by a whole host of women constables. He couldn't believe his luck, as they passed the phone from person to person, whispering nonsensical nothings into his ear.

And while he held forth on his 'discovery' of the bomb, flirting outrageously, his sweet-talking spiel was cut short by a clutch of chuckling policemen, who traced the call and arrested him at home.

WHEELS IN WHEELS

■ It was straight out of a Marx brothers' movie. There were four adventurers, clutching the canvas of an auto-rickshaw, even as their compatriot wrestled with the driver upfront. As the auto veered madly across the street, it hit two scooter-borne men. And when it finally screeched to a halt, the driver had a punch-up with the five men, while the two scooterists fought with them all.

The two dislodged passengers meanwhile stood on the sidelines, calling out to the police to stop the blows. Two policemen arrived to declare a truce and scrutinise the squabble. It was convoluted: the auto-rickshaw had hit a cyclist, causing minor damage to the wheel, and attempted to escape. But angered, the cyclist and his friends latched onto the vehicle, resembling a Hindi film chase scene. The policemen were left to clear the mess. Could it be registered as a Case of the Clinging Chase?

AURAL JUSTICE

■ If justice weren't already blindfolded, she would lower her eyes in shame to escape the pot-shots taken at her daily in the country's courts.

Take the case lodged in a sessions court in 1989. Five men were accused in a college dispute and the case limped along for two years.

Until last fortnight, when a judge decided that campus capers should be treated with appropriate insouciance. Unable to decide the case according to the letter of the law, the sessions judge had to take recourse to its spirit.

Trying a dose of native justice, he asked the five defendants to tug at their ears. Not once but thrice, and apologise to the court. The case was then dismissed and the five set free. Guess if they can't catch criminals by the scruff of their necks, at least they can get them by their ears.

STRIPPED TO WED

■ There was a chill in the air but you wouldn't have known. There was a gaggle of gentlemen, divested of cumbersome clothes, baring their sizeable stomachs, and displaying placards aplenty. And as the members of the youth wing of a political party waited outside the prime minister's house last fortnight, they added a new demand to the usual stock of slogans. Lack of jobs, price rise, yes. But also—or, because of them—no *jeevan saathis*. In what turned out to be a not-so-great underwear march, the men lamented that lack of jobs left them with little value in the marriage market. Nor did our extremely selective young men want wives who did not work. But dressing in just their underwear is not tailor-made to woo any women to their side. And their burgeoning bellies hardly inspire sympathy for their cause.

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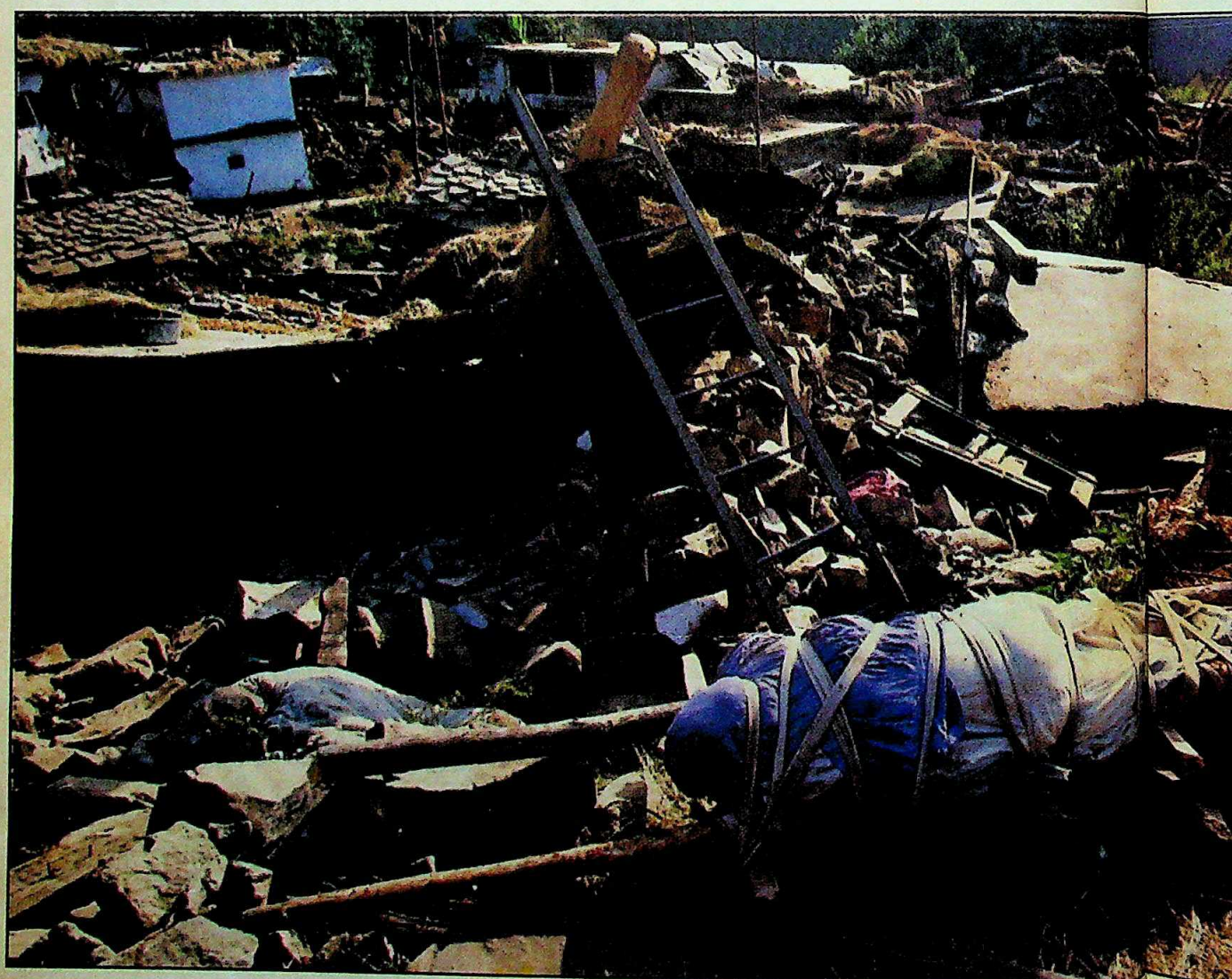
TREMOR OF DESTRUCTION

In the space of 45 seconds, most of Garhwal was tragically ravaged, and with over a 1,000 dead and 30,000 houses destroyed, the process of rehabilitation is a daunting one.



Mass funerals were undertaken, with bodies being carried on makeshift slings to the edge of th

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Text by RAHUL PATHAK
Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

IT lasted for less than a minute. But even days after it struck, the colossal havoc it wrought was still being assessed. When the earth bucked, the one thing it killed was the senses, and in Uttarkashi it reduced the word death to such a cliche that now it fails to shock or startle. In fact, it even fails to register in the consciousness.

What is dominant are statistics. The teams of doctors and relief workers as well as the entire administration are playing a dazed, and macabre, numbers game. Figures on sheets of official paper keep getting updated as more bodies are pulled out, and the death toll keeps mounting. And in the ravaged villages, amidst the rubble of flattened homes, the game is catching on. A village that lost only 20-odd people is almost apologetic.

e of th river for a swift cremation.

Many have lost not only all their belongings but entire families.

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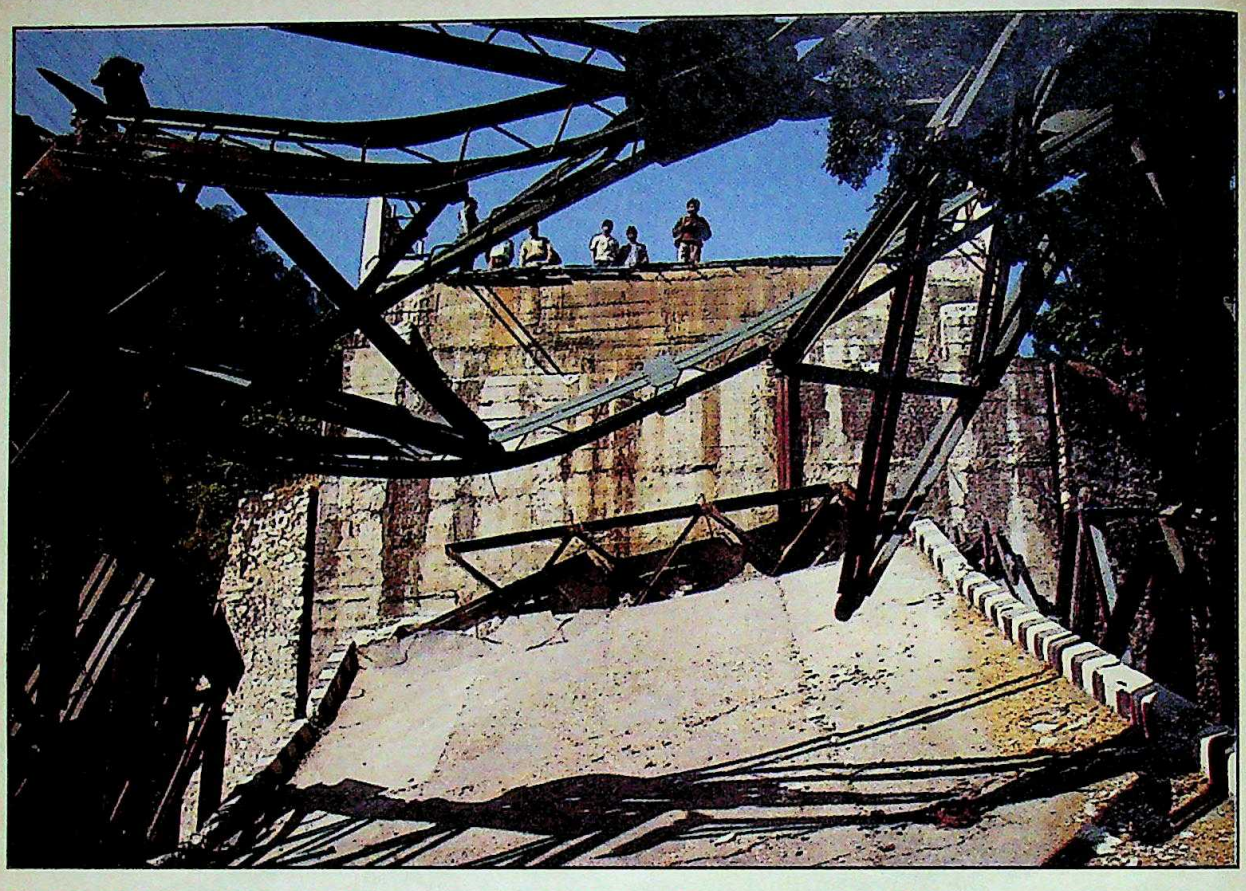

With the bridge to Uttarkashi merely mangled iron, villages were cut off from rescue operations.

There were others where 60, or even 70, died. But some distance away, where children search for mothers who will never return and grown men weep unashamedly in fear and sorrow, numbers no longer matter.

However, the statistics are still frightening. Nearly 1,000 dead in Uttarkashi alone. Over 30,000 houses destroyed. Nearly 250 villages ravaged. Bridges smashed and 60 km of road ripped apart. And all this in a space of just 45 seconds.

Buried beneath the debris are the hundreds who died at 2.53 a.m., that fateful October 20. None of them ever awoke from their deep slumber as the quake struck. Although many of the fresh concrete constructions survived, the colonial structures in the main administration area could not withstand the shock. Superintendent of Police Uma Shankar Singh was living in one such house. While he ran out of the house as soon as the tremors began, his only son who was buried beneath the falling rubble died of suffocation.

The hospital itself was wrecked by the tremors. Patients ran out screaming as the floors began to crack. The operation theatre was completely destroyed. Many of the patients who hurt themselves in the ensuing melee never returned. In any case, there was no space left for them. Many of the survivors say they were taken totally by surprise. Says Dr Sanjiv Gupta: "I looked out of my window and saw a huge sheet of flame between two hill-tops. I don't know whether it was the effect of rocks crashing or some volatile gas escaping. I just ran out." Others like U.D. Choube, additional district magistrate, admit that they stood simply transfixed as the rubble fell all around them.

For the most part, people in the villages beyond Uttarkashi were more stunned by the fact that they had escaped death by a mere whisker. People recall the rumble that built into a roar before everything collapsed. All this while, no word came from the villages. It could not. For the 56-metre bridge at Gawana—the sole link between Uttarkashi and the region beyond to Gangotri—had collapsed. Its steel frame had folded at crazy angles and sent it screaming into the Bhagirathi. As a result, the hapless villagers were totally cut off from the rest of the country.

Beyond the broken bridge was disaster area. However, it was only a few days

TEHRI DAM

Doubtful Future

THE earthquake has revived the controversy over the siting of the Tehri dam. Even Narasimha Rao admitted "the earthquake has raised certain questions". Scientists point out that Tehri is located in what they call the "seismic gap" along the 2,500-km seismic belt. According to Roorkee University's Dr Sinvhal, there are three seismic microzones in the Tehri-Garhwal region which are "very vulnerable". And the Tehri dam is located in one of these microzones. Says N.D. Jayal of INTACH, an anti-dam activist: "It would be madness on the Government's part to go ahead with the dam." On the other hand, L.S. Srivastava, professor of earthquake engineering at Roorkee University and a member of the committee that cleared the dam, argues: "We're prepared for the maximum quake." —W.P.S. SIDHU

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THE EARTHQUAKE

Low Intensity, High Damage

THE killer earthquake was the product of the 23-million-year-old aggressive Indian plate moving north-east at a rate of 5 cm per year, and ploughing under the massive 300-million-year-old Eurasian plate. This, created an unbearable strain—like a wooden foot-ruler bent to breaking point. And on the fateful day at 2.53 a.m., the tension snapped 15 km below the surface, 80 km north of Almora town—the epicentre, according to provisional data put out by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD). It created a rupture nearly 25-km-long in the subterranean structure and registered 6.1 on the Richter scale, making it a 'moderate' earthquake—its destructive power being at least a 1,000 times less than that of a quake which measures 8 on the same scale. Yet, it released energy of the order of 280 kilotons of TNT—unleashing nearly 15 times more power than the Hiroshima bomb.

This earthquake, originated in the 50-km-wide, highly active seismic belt that lies between what seismologists call the Main Boundary Fault (MBF) and the Main Central Thrust (MCT) *(see diagram)*. It is along these twin faults that the Indian plate is shoving the Eurasian plate.

But seismologists have challenged the IMD's claimed epicentre. Says Harsh Sinvhal, geoscientist at Roorkee University's earth sciences department: "It's interesting that there isn't much damage in the Almora area itelf." Some have identified Agora—a village 15 km from Uttarkashi—as the epicentre. IMD scientists claim quakes can damage distant places as in the 1985 Mexico quake where the maximum damage was in Mexico City, 350 km from the epicentre.

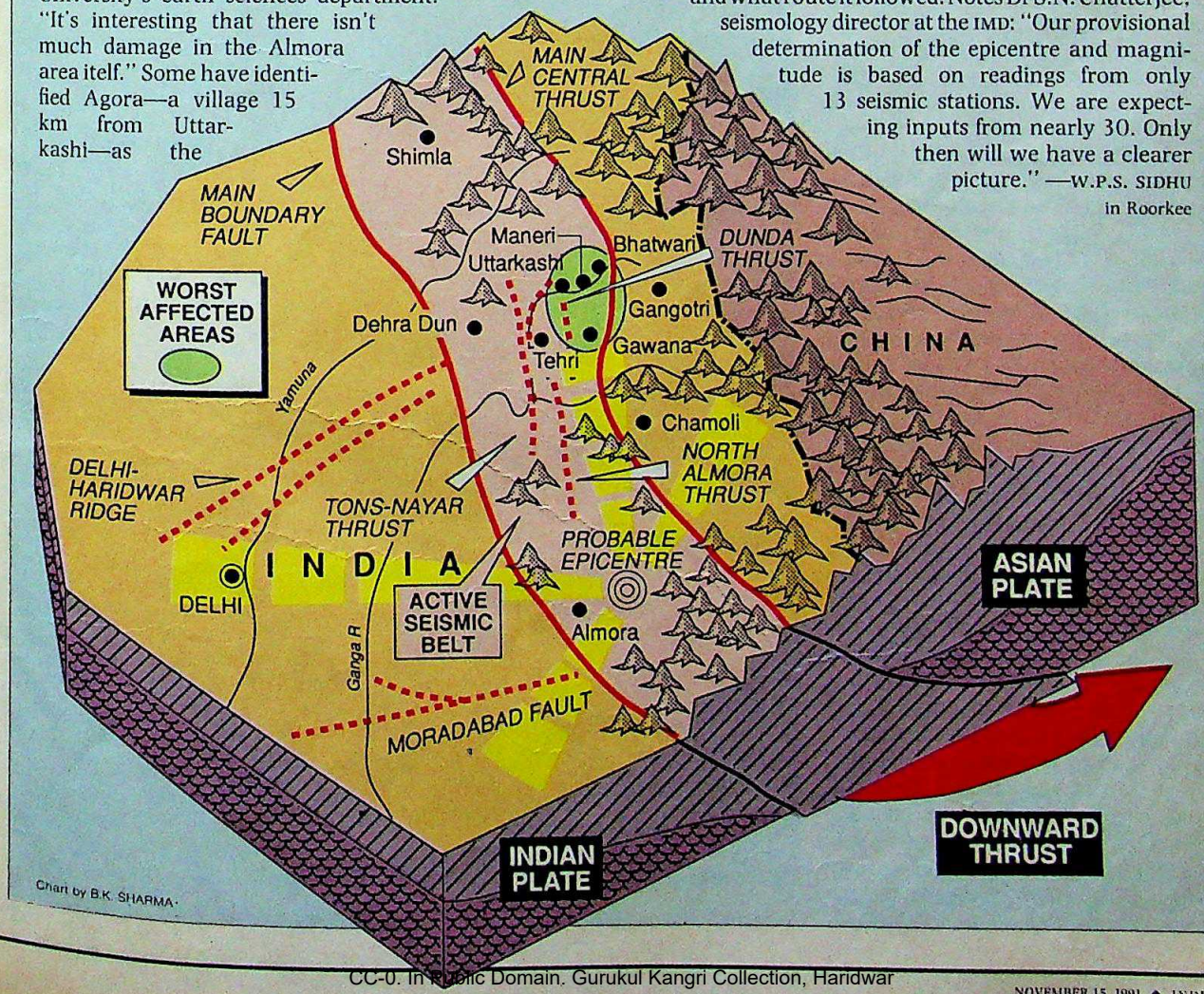
Among the probable scientific reasons:

► The worst affected areas are located along the banks of the Bhagirathi valley, which is made up of soft alluvial soil. This soil was literally shaken by the quake and led to the collapse of houses and other buildings.

► Block tectonic scientists argue that perhaps Almora and Uttarkashi are connected by a subterranean solid rock 'block'. And, when the quake erupted at Almora, it was transmitted along the rock all the way to Uttarkashi, where the block ends—and erupted onto the unsuspecting area.

► The path of the quake is traced along the local 'faults' in the area. Explains Dr Sinvhal: "Nature tries to follow the path of least resistance. In the case of earthquakes, this path is along existing 'faults'." So, the Almora quake could have travelled along the north Almora thrust and dissipated its energy at the intersection with the Dunda thrust. And the shock felt in Delhi could have come along the Delhi-Haridwar ridge, which seismologists suspect, intersects the north Almora thrust deep in the earth.

It's too early to say where exactly the quake originated and what route it followed. Notes Dr S.N. Chatterjee, seismology director at the IMD: "Our provisional determination of the epicentre and magnitude is based on readings from only 13 seismic stations. We are expecting inputs from nearly 30. Only then will we have a clearer picture." —W.P.S. SIDHU in Roorkee



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later that Uttarkashi discovered the extent of the damage. When the State Security Bureau and the police started totting up the casualties. And armymen and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) jawans began pulling out the bodies. Across the jumbled rocks lie the remains of about a hundred houses in Ganeshpur where 47 people died. The houses are identical in their destruction: all of them have walls of rubble resting on rafters and roofs of slate nailed to wood. Beside them are a handful of weeping survivors, a few broken utensils and crumbling walls in the backdrop. Govind Singh Pathriyal lost 11 of his family members. Yet he is stoic: "*Devi ka prakop tha, saheb.*" (It was the fury of the goddess.) "I heard a sound like the roar of a lion. I was so scared that I did not know whether to run inside the house or outside." Others in his family are not so stoic. Two young girls weep in deep, halting gasps. They have lost their brothers, their nephews and nieces to the fury of the quake. Ten bodies have been recovered and one is still buried beneath the debris.

The despair gets worse. Pathriyal says the entire village had a mass funeral for the dead in the morning, with the bodies being carried to the Bhagirathi for cremation. Says he: "*Ganga maiya mein baha diya. Aur kya karte?*" (We put the bodies in the holy Ganges. What else could we do?)

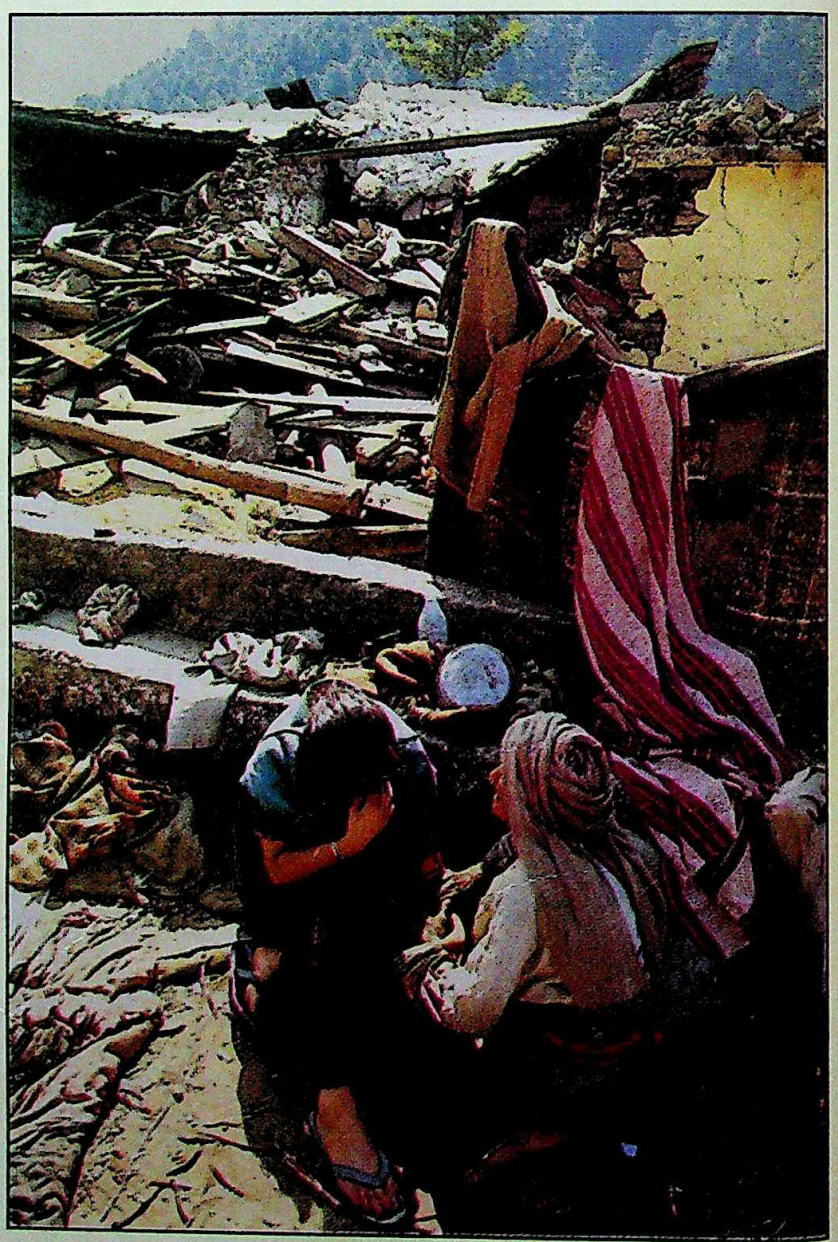
Most inconsolable is Tilak Ram Bhatt as he cradles a small bundle, wrapped in green. It is the body of his year-old daughter who was trapped for a full day. The child looks like she could be fast asleep. He and his brother walk down to the Bhagirathi. Tilak Ram murmurs a prayer while his brother picks up a couple of rounded stones. Together they lower the body into the waters of the Bhagirathi. As it disappears in a flash, Tilak Ram stares at the waters and then slowly walks away.

Ganeshpur, Netala, Heena.... The story is the same everywhere. Only the tally varies—47, 41, 39.... Rocks and boulders have settled across vast sections of the villages. Every few minutes, a cloud of dust rises from the face of the mountain and a few more stones flake off and fall. Between the periodic landslides, the stench of rotting animal carcasses rises. The road has endless jagged cracks snaking through it, a couple of feet deep. Every few minutes, groups of people negotiate the road, carrying the injured on makeshift stretchers. In a macabre sight, many villagers drag their torn limbs to the hospital. Aid doesn't reach the villages as the Government claims they are inaccessible.

Eight kilometres down the road is the Maneri Hydel Project, with an 'Entry Prohibited' sign stamped across in large letters. But the sign is no longer relevant. For the site has now been converted into a cremation ground. Just a kilometre above Maneri is Jamak, a village ravaged beyond recognition.

THREE bodies, straddled across a single log each, are being burnt and immersed in the waters. Says an old man in resignation: "*Dekho madari ka khel. Insaan apne ko itna bada samajhta hai. Woh kuchh nahin hai.*" (Look at the games of the Almighty. Man thinks so much of himself, but he is really nothing.) Scores of burnt wood pieces bob against the wall of the dam. Jamak has already cremated 70 of its dead. The village has more people dead than alive today.

Now, the nerves are clearly frayed. An ITBP man, who has been removing bodies from beneath the rubble, shouts: "We are extricating your dead. Now you want us to pull out your belongings too?" Not far away, some university students are distributing bananas to the victims. Sher Singh Chauhan takes his share and begins to sob hysterically. As a helicopter whizzes overhead, he shouts: "*Hum bheekh kha rahe hain, logon ki.*" (We are living off alms.) The cries becomes louder. "They go around in those helicopters saying they are doing something



As people starve and suffer, relief remains a cruel mirage.

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for us. They haven't even sent us food for three days. Last night, the army gave us some *khichdi*, but that is all." Others attack the *sarkar* as many of the injured children are still sleeping in the cold.

Amidst the ruins are the bodies of a father and daughter with their heads covered. Since they had no one else in the world, the village chowkidar is making a wooden sling on which he will carry them to the river and cremate them. "I have already carried seven bodies to the river today. *Chala nahin ja raha.*" (I can hardly walk.)

Dr Ajit Gairola, who works at the Uttarkashi district hospital, has just returned from the quake-ravaged Dindsari, a village close to Jamak. Though he says that six teams of doctors have been touring the villages, it is hardly enough. Says Gairola: "I examined 25 survivors in Dindsari alone who were seriously injured. Though they have to be moved to a hospital immediately, there is no way to move them as the bridge is broken and the road wrecked."

WITH the road totally destroyed, the only access is by way of choppers. The rescue missions have five of them which they use for aerial surveys and transporting officials. Although there have been a few symbolic air-droppings of relief supplies, there are many glitches. As Pratap, a resident of Kishanpur which received these bounties, says: "Most of the stuff fell into the river."

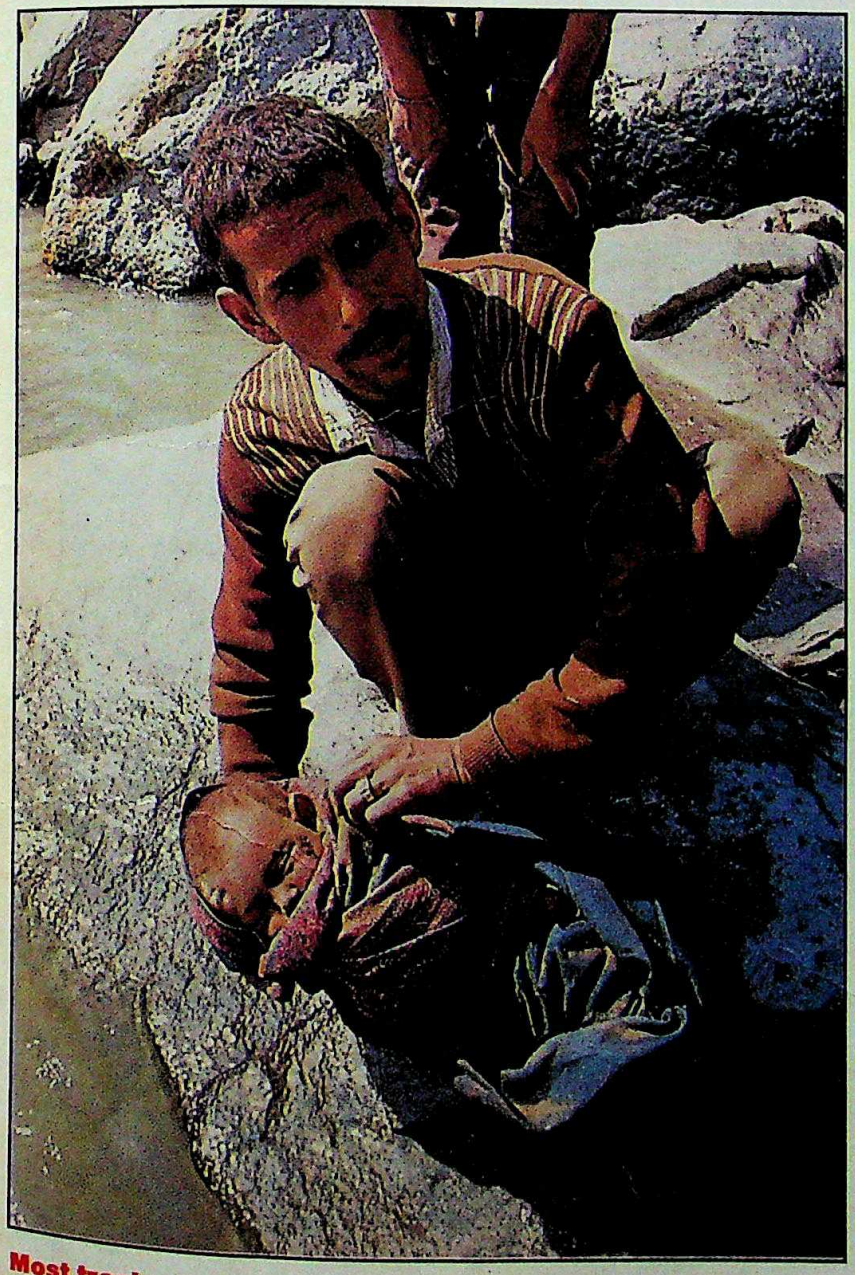
Meanwhile, over 100 tonnes of relief material lay in Dehra Dun waiting to be transported to Uttarkashi. But when an official at the district magistrate's office sat down to actually compile a list of relief material received, the only major item was a consignment of 155 blankets. Hardly enough even for one village.

The problems are endless. Dr Yash Pal, additional director, health and family planning, said that four choppers would be used to carry doctors to "difficult areas" and ferry back seriously injured patients from there. However, he said this full three days after the quake by which time the fate of most of the seriously injured patients had already been decided. Admitted he: "We are doing our best. We have enough doctors and supplies. But you know what happens to patients who sleep in the open without food."

Relief work is still on in full swing. The administration plans to use the helicopters to evacuate the 200-odd tourists stuck in the Gangotri area. The place is abuzz with activity, with the commissioners of Meerut and Garhwal supervising the operation, and senior policemen and bureaucrats coming from Ghaziabad, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Roorkee, Dehra Dun and Tehri. The place is teeming with their jeeps and cars. Typically, all of the officiers sit and plan from Uttarkashi. If they have to venture out, it is only by helicopter. In fact, the commissioner of Garhwal even asked a couple of bureaucrats who had come from Muzaffarnagar: "Who asked you to come?"

For the victims, the wait for relief seems unending. Even as armymen and ITBP jawans cover every village on foot, their brief is only to extricate bodies. They do not take food to the victims or carry the injured to hospital. And the ones who have reached the Uttarkashi hospital sleep on a cold floor under a shamiana. Many are too scared to sleep inside the hospital building. They fear the concrete may crumble again. Says Madan from Chowranghee village: "I have been here for 36 hours but no one has even bothered to see what is wrong with me." Even he knows he is suffering from a multiple-fracture.

But the authorities have other problems on their mind. Like repairing the Uttarkashi-Gangotri road, strategically important because of its proximity with China; receiving touring ministers and issuing press notes. For the quake survivors of Uttarkashi, the real nightmare has only just begun. ■



Most tragic were those like Tilak Ram who lost his only child.

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1991 BY-ELECTIONS

Reputations at Stake

The forthcoming by-elections are more significant for the high-profile candidates contesting, than for the 16 Lok Sabha and 58 assembly seats up for grabs. Some heavyweights are Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, Defence Minister Sharad Pawar, former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, and former filmstars Rajesh Khanna and Shatrughan Sinha. Satish Sharma of the Congress(I) is bidding to become the new steward of the most cosseted constituency in the country, Amethi. INDIA TODAY assesses their chances.

NANDYAL

Safe Haven

No opposition for Rao

NANDYAL is a one-horse race. What remains to be seen is, how the race is run. If for nothing else, for purely academic reasons.

A calculated choice of constituency, Nandyal is considered a perfectly safe seat for returning Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao: the Congress(I) retained it by the widest margin of votes for any Lok Sabha contest in Andhra Pradesh in the summer elections. So confident are they of winning, that ever since Narasimha Rao filed his nomination papers, he has not felt the need to return to campaign.

Zealous Congressmen in the state are not taking any chances, however. And have been using persuasion, and even coercion, to get Narasimha Rao elected unopposed. Finally in the fray are five independents and one BJP candidate. A serious threat was eliminated early in the race when Telugu Desam chief N.T. Rama Rao announced his party's exit, to the dismay of his allies.

Congressmen also scuttled the attempts of some independents to join the contest by whisking them away from under the nose of the returning officer. Complained Rayalaseema Rythu Sangham leader S. Sanjeeva Reddy, who was forcibly detained by Congress(I) toughs: "They showed scant respect for democratic practices." The ruling party's aim was to keep down the number of independent candidates in the fray, lest the death of one—many have inadequate security—led to countermanding of the poll.

An interesting sideshow is being provided in Allagadda, one of the seven assembly segments in Nandyal. Congress(I) and Telugu Desam members clashed when B.V. Nagi Reddy, the Telugu Desam candidate, escorted by a convoy of 50 trucks, jeeps and cars, tried to make a dramatic entry into Nandyal to file his nomination. Crude bombs were hurled and fire opened. Finally, Reddy was forced by musclemen to take a circuitous route, and managed to file his papers only just in time.

Besides using its muscle power, the Congress(I) is busy handing out sops: like the carving of a new district named after Rajiv Gandhi with Nandyal as its headquarters; providing better irrigation facilities and new industries.

For sceptical voters, there is only a sense of *deja vu*. Says B. Mohan Rao, a Nandyal shopkeeper: "We are not expecting anything."

—AMARNATH K. MENON

A. PRABHAKAR RAO

Besides persuasion and muscle power, the Congress(I) is busy giving sops to win votes for Rao.

BARAMATI

Home Turf

Pawar sitting pretty

IF the campaign for Baramati seems to lack lustre, there is reason. This is the pocket borough of the Pawar clan. And both Union Defence Minister Sharad Pawar and nephew, Ajit—who are contesting the Lok Sabha and assembly seats respectively—are sure of winning, with there being no real opposition of any kind even to pose a formal challenge. Having dominated the life of this small town for over two decades, they are now all set to gain electoral mileage from their past efforts.

Baramati's significance on the political and economic map of Maharashtra has in fact increased in direct relation to the rising political fortunes of Pawar. The family has cultivated the region with care and calculation, knitting the once famine-scarred town into the prosperous sugar belt of southern Maharashtra. Today, cooperative sugar factories, small-scale industries, extensive vineyards and even an Italian-supervised winery are part of its increasingly prosperous economic landscape. At a conservative estimate, the initial invest-

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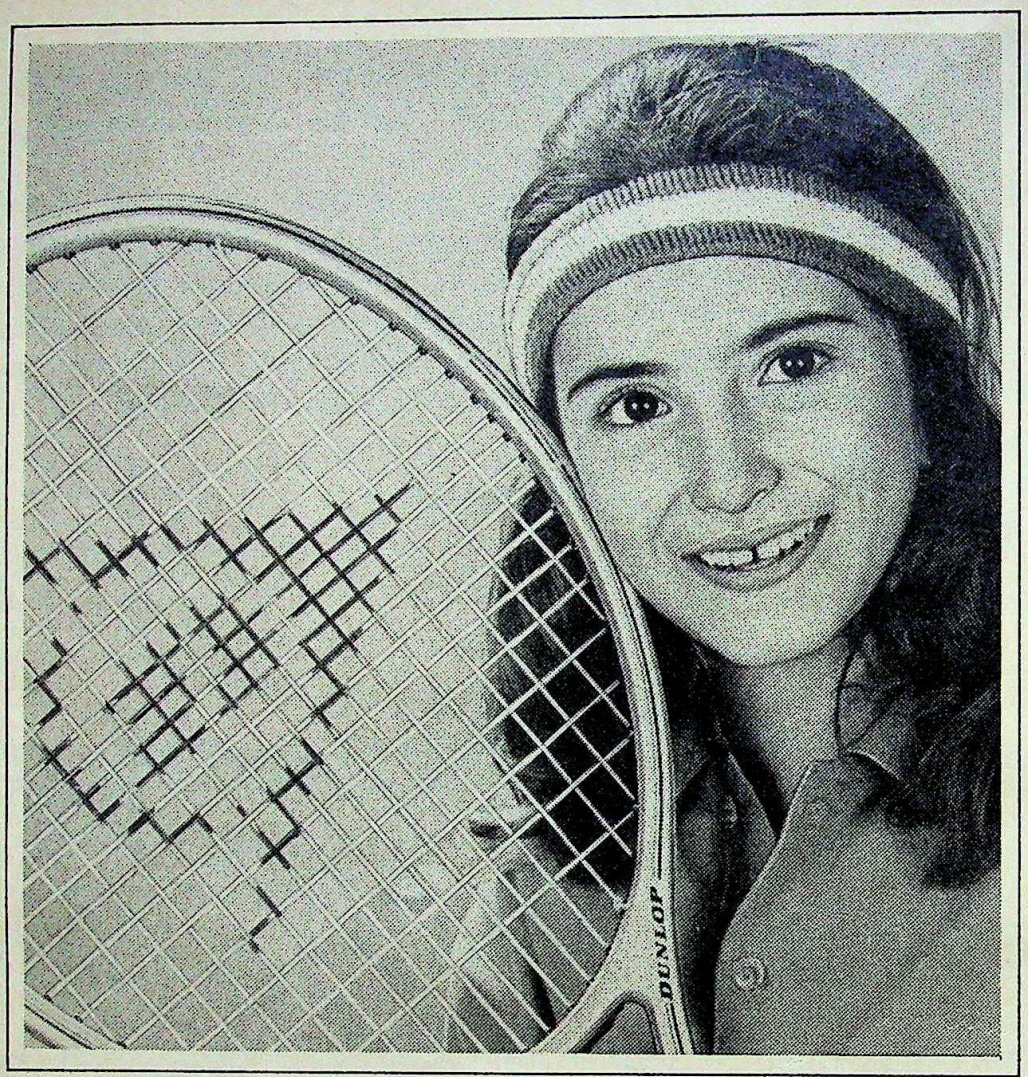

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So secure is Pawar's position that all the Shiv Sena-BJP candidate hopes to do is narrow the loss margin.

ment in the major plants cleared for various industrial estates in the constituency add up to a staggering Rs 700-crore. And that excludes the scores of ancillary units coming up.

One of the many entrepreneurs who have set up shop here is Ajit Pawar, the former chief minister's political heir. According to Ajit, the Pawar family owns 100 acres of agricultural land in Baramati, besides poultry farms, a foundry, shares in the winery, and now an edible oil venture.

The Pawars' political association with the town goes quite long back, to the 1930s, when the Union minister's mother, Shardabai, broke all norms and was elected chairperson of the local municipal works committee. His elder brother, Dinkar Appasaheb, meanwhile, started a model farm and several educational institutions in the then little town of Baramati.

But it is Sharad Pawar who has played a key role in the area. Starting as a nonentity in the Youth Congress, his political graph has moved up rapidly. Says Appasaheb with pride: "What distinguishes him is that he is a daredevil. He's not afraid to take risks."

It shows. In his relaxed attitude in the heat of electoral battle: confident that Baramati will not fail him. In fact, ever since he kicked off his campaign outside the Pune Collectorate after filing his papers, Pawar hasn't felt the need to return. And may now do so only in the final days before the polls. As for the Opposition, the only signs of activity visible are in the camp of BJP-Shiv Sena candidate Dr Pratibha Lokhande. And she too hopes to just narrow her loss margin.

—M. RAHMAN

AMETHI

Loyalist Line

Sharma plays Rajiv card

IF there's one constituency that's generated even more interest than the prime minister's, it is Amethi. And this even though it's a Congress(I) fief. For pitched against the Congress(I)'s representative Satish Sharma are relatively lightweight candidates like the BJP's Madan Mohan Singh and the Janata Dal's Ram Singh.

Sharma will definitely find it easy going in Rajiv Gandhi's constituency. Having been the former prime minister's poll manager during the 1984 elections, he's more in touch with the locals and the ground level reality. However, that could also work to his disadvantage. For Sharma has been known to be rather arrogant in his dealings with the people.

Yet, the pluses far outnumber the minuses for Rajiv's pilot friend. For one, Sharma is fighting as Rajiv-Sonia's "representative"—a plank on which he is sure to coast through to victory. Especially since the people of Amethi had sent at least 30 delegations requesting Sonia to contest the poll. For another, he is cashing in on the emotional appeal of Rajiv Gandhi's brutal assassination. Said CLP leader Pramod Tewari: "Each vote cast in favour of Satish Sharma would be seen as a standing tribute to Rajiv Gandhi."

With the BJP and the Janata Dal having virtually given up the seat without a fight, the Congress(I) should certainly romp home victorious. In fact, Sharma is so complacent, he's hardly making much of an effort to campaign and drum up support among the people of Amethi. But he is still modest: "I will be here as a caretaker only till the stage when one of Rajiv's family members take over."

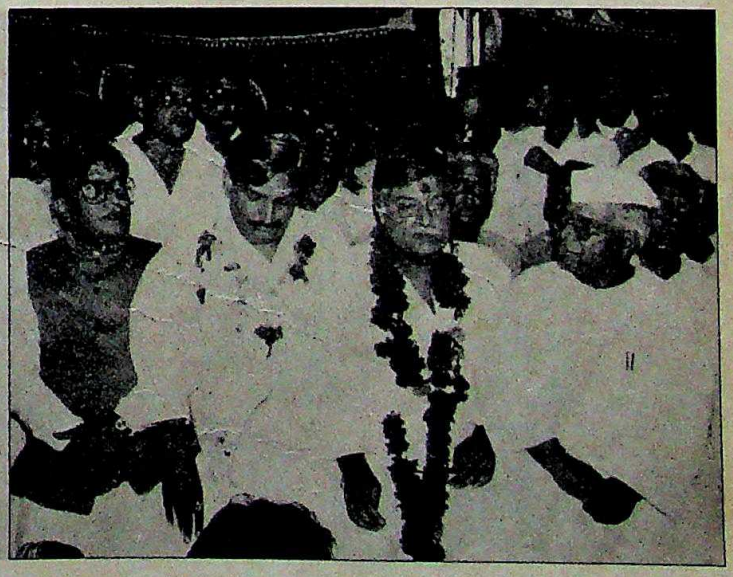
—DILIP AWASTHI

JASWANTNAGAR

In a Bind

Mulayam is in trouble

MULAYAM Singh Yadav's problems in his home constituency of Jaswantnagar are quite a few, and far from over. The hangover of the last poll persists. In June, the former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh was tested by the arrival of his erstwhile patron Darshan Singh Yadav on a Congress(I) ticket. But bullets flew and the poll



With the BJP and Janata Dal virtually throwing in the towel, Sharma should romp home even more easily.

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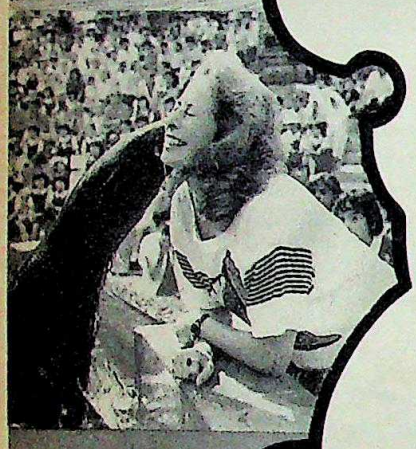

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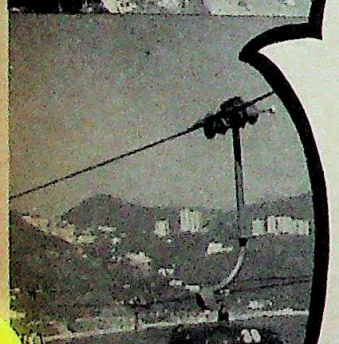

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was countermanded.

With the cast unchanged, Yadav is in trouble again. More so, since there is a BJP Government in Lucknow, which would like to limit the bout to Mulayam-Darshan. Their choice of a low-key campaign and Daya Ram Shakya, is an attempt at polarising the 9 per cent Shakya vote in the segment. Darshan Singh is likely to gain the rest of the OBC—specially Harijan—votes, inimical to Mulayam Singh.

In a face-saving move Mulayam Singh Yadav has filed from a second constituency—Tilhar. But apart from this, he has shown few signs of panic. While Darshan Singh has been campaigning door-to-door, Yadav has been sitting in Lucknow bargaining with the Janata Dal.

But to salvage his reputation, he has to win from Jaswantnagar. With Darshan Singh, also a Yadav, working on dividing the community, a slight swing away from him in the OBC vote could blunt his chances. The activity in Etawah will really hot up only when the former chief minister comes home.

—DILIP AWASTHI

R.K. GUPTA

If Darshan Singh splits the Yadav vote and the OBC bank, Mulayam could well end up losing.

NEW DELHI

Star Duel

Khanna-Sinha match antics

IT could only be titled Star Wars. When actors Rajesh Khanna and Shatrughan Sinha decided to slug it out for the New Delhi constituency, voters got ready for some real life drama. The actors tried to shrug off their star labels, though. Complained Khanna: "I'm not a star. I'm a serious politician." Sinha was equally vehement: "I haven't come as an actor but as an activist."

Yet the crowds came for their celluloid appeal. For them, it was a clash between the treacly romantic hero, Rajesh Khanna, and moviedom's macho man, Shatrughan Sinha.

Call it the BJP's strategic defence initiative. Last May, party leader L.K. Advani beat Khanna by a wafer-thin majority of a mere 1,500 votes. This time it decided to cast Sinha in the electoral drama. Moreover, by making its announcement two days before the Congress(I) renominated Khanna, the BJP took the Congress(I) by surprise.

Meanwhile, the stars are pulling out all the stops for the campaign. Khanna even had estranged wife Dimple joining in. Quipped Sinha: "*Yadi hamari vajah se unka parivar thodi der ke liye hi jud jata hai to mujhe khushi hogi.*" (I can only be happy if his family is even temporarily united because of us).

But such sarcasm was wasted on the voters. Khanna still drew massive crowds as he listened to the complaints of the trading community in Lajpat Nagar and signed autograph books. Later, he fervently supported the renovation of a local temple in a nearby slum. He even promised to make Maharishi Valmiki's birth anniversary a national holiday. Not far away, poll platitudes glibly tripped off Sinha's tongue as he reminded people of his long record in public life. And wife Poonam struck an empathetic chord by pitching in in Punjabi.

Khanna has an edge over his opponent, though. For one, he has the experience of the last campaign behind him. Most importantly, Delhi's south Indian population is more likely to vote for Narasimha Rao's party than the BJP. But Sinha will have the backing of 80,000-odd Biharis, the advantage of standing from BJP-territory, and his considerably superior crowd-pulling skills.

—ALOK TIWARI

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Khanna will have to stretch his aura in order to outlast Sinha's superior and louder oratory.

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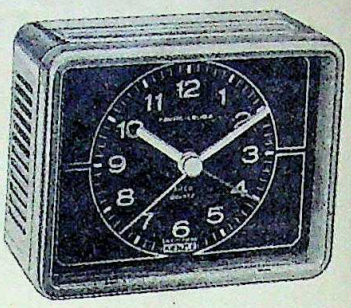

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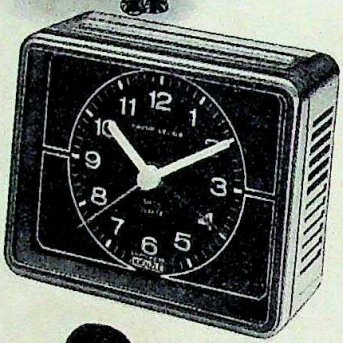
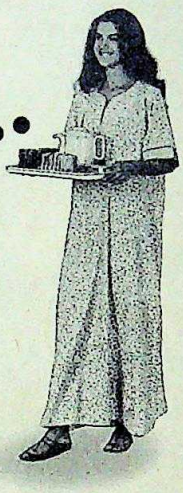
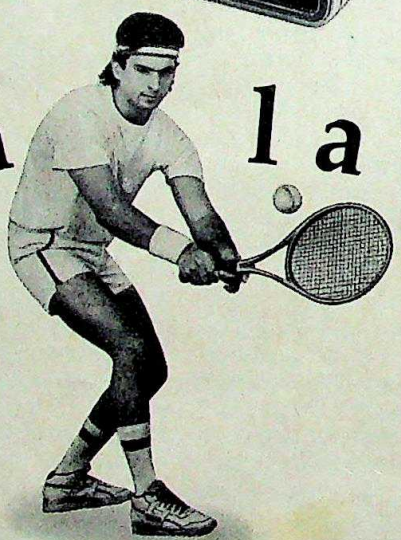
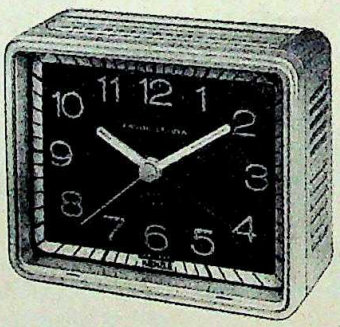




Tra la la...





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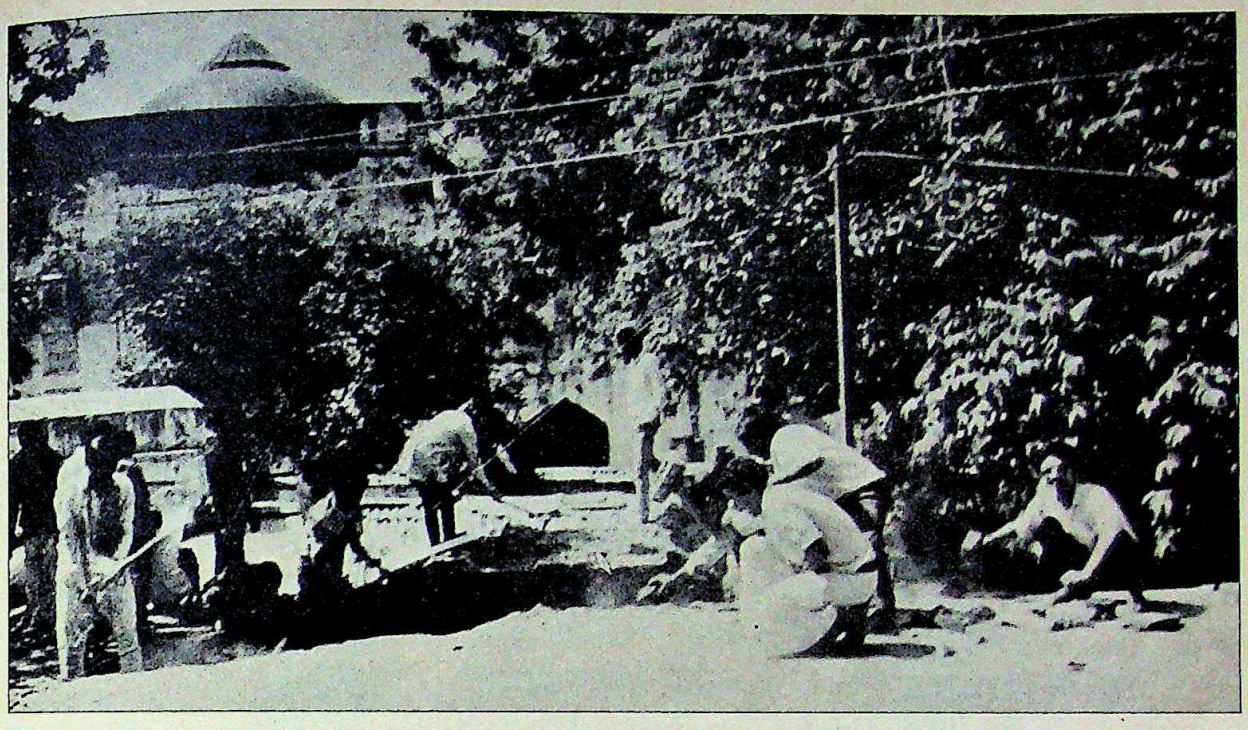
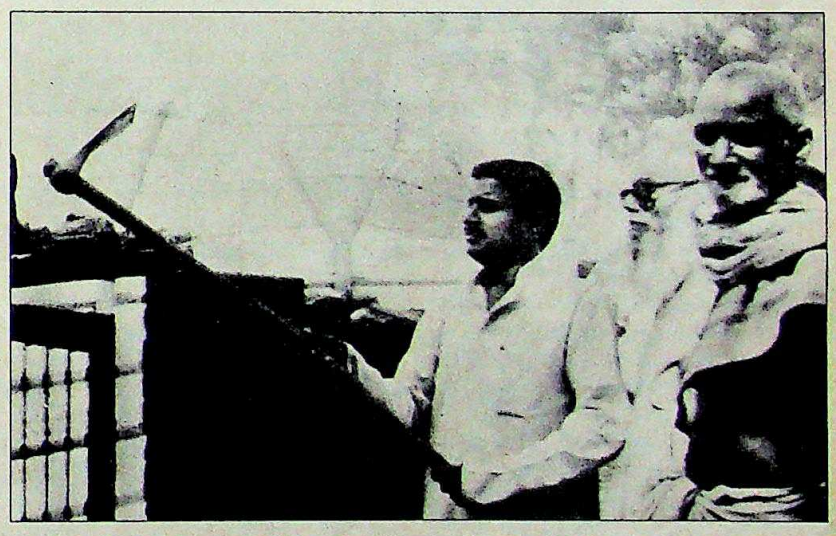


AYODHYA

A Fresh Furore

Takeover of disputed land around shrine spells trouble

By DILIP AWASTHI



Kar sevaks demolishing temples (top); and VHP leader Katiyar

HAVING fought an open war last year, the VHP seems to have opted for a stealthy guerrilla strike this time. But the stakes, for the country as well as for VHP's more circumspect cousin, the BJP, are still high. The Ram Janmabhoomi temple, even without the fervent sloganeering of the last elections, is still likely to be a combustible element in the by-election equation.

The concoction is poised for an explosion. On October 11, the BJP Government took over 2.77 acres of land around the disputed shrine. For the first post in the renewed battle, it was surprisingly muted. But then in rapid-fire succession followed the demolition of two buildings—ironically two small Hindu shrines—on the disputed site and the beginning of *bhoomi pujan*.

Yet, the impression that increasingly seems to have gained ground is that the temple will never come to be. Perhaps the players seem to have realised the importance of using the issue as a perennial political pawn. It is also clear that the once-unbeatable team of BJP and VHP is not playing in tandem. While the VHP's handling of the issue, especially since the start of the 40-day Bajrang Rudra Mahayagna on October 18, suggests that it is going for broke, the BJP appears to be hedging its bets.

And if the Uttar Pradesh Government feels the pressure has blown sky-high, it has only itself to blame. Having ridden to power on the Ram Janmabhoomi juggernaut, the Kalyan Singh Government neither negotiated with any Muslim leaders nor moved to set up a judicial commission to probe last year's Ayodhya killings. This became especially embarrassing for the VHP.

When the state Government did act, it was only with its telescopic sights aimed at the vote bank. A couple of days after the by-elections were announced, it wrote to the chief justice of Allahabad High Court to assign a judge for the judicial panel. The news was accompanied by the usual triumphant trumpeting. But not the notification which stated that the Govern-

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ment would be acquiring land around the disputed structure. In fact, the notification was published through advertisements in two not-very-prominent Faizabad dailies. It did little to muffle the consequent storm. Said Babri Masjid Action Committee convenor Zafaryab Jilani who, along with other Muslim leaders, has taken the issue to the high court: "By issuing the notification, the Government has challenged the high court's status quo order." In August 1989, a special full bench of the high court had directed that a status quo be maintained on the 23 plots of land around the disputed structure till the court identifies a map of the area in question.

ACCORDING to the notification, the land has been acquired for a public purpose, namely the development of tourism. But that hardly explains the "pressing urgency" behind the waiving of Section 5A of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 *(see box)*. Faizabad District Magistrate Netram has one explanation. Says he: "It is to provide the pilgrims with amenities during Kartik mela, Panchkosi and Chaudahkosi parikrama in November—in which 10-12 lakh pilgrims participate."

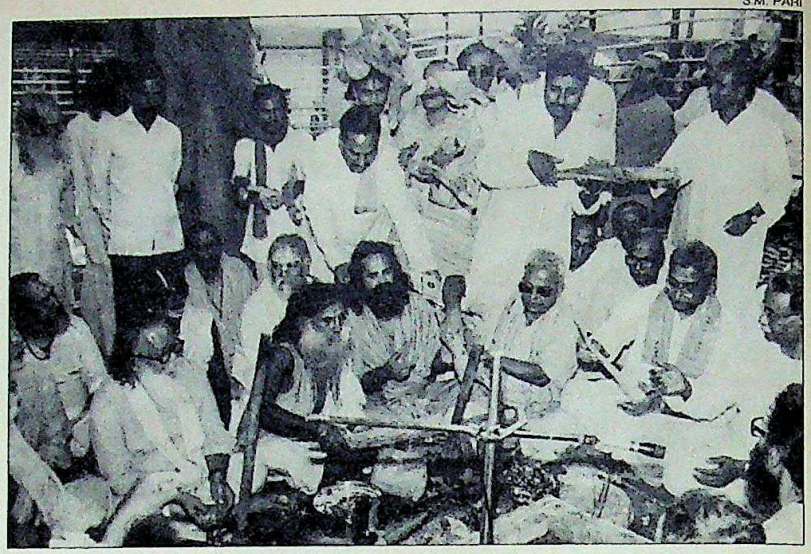
The notification was issued so covertly that apparently even the VHP did not know of it. But that seemed to be the new rule of the game. The chief minister had asked the VHP not to begin kar seva without taking the state Government into confidence. But General Secretary Ashok Singhal had repeatedly said that kar seva would begin any time after October 18. It did. Soon after the start of the mahayagna at the hastily set-up Karsevakapuram, VHP activist and BJP parliamentarian Vinay Katiyar arrived at the spot with some kar sevaks and told officials that he had come to demolish two temples, which had been transferred to the VHP.

Even before the local administration could get clearance from Lucknow, the demolition began. It continued, with a solitary break, till 3.30 a.m. on October 19. All the while, the hotline between Netram's residence and Chief Minister Kalyan Singh's office buzzed overtime. The chief minister wanted to speak to Katiyar because the Government feared that the VHP activists would demolish Ram Chabutara and Kaushalya Rasoi, which form part of the disputed property but are under VHP's legal control. Initially Katiyar was not too keen on speaking to the chief minister. When he did, all he said was: "We are determined to go ahead with our programme." That was not the end of the VHP surprises. On October 21, it held *bhoomi pujan* in the trench dug up at the demolition site, 20 feet away from the 1989 shilanyas site. Said Singhal after the puja: "The process of construction has begun."

But even the VHP leaders agree that kar seva is yet to begin. Says Mahesh Narain Singh, secretary of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti: "Kar seva will only begin when we start work for the construction." That is not likely to happen till soil testing is completed. The Left Front and National Front have, naturally, cried foul. But the Congress(I) has done nothing except ask the state Government to review its decision to acquire land. It need not do more, as long as no harm comes to the shrine itself. In fact, the BJP and VHP will have greater trouble justifying the demolition of two temples.

Meanwhile, political parties continue to derive mileage from the prevailing situation even as the Congress(I) raps them for it. As they do so, the country's cup of communal woes may run over. ■

S.M. PARI



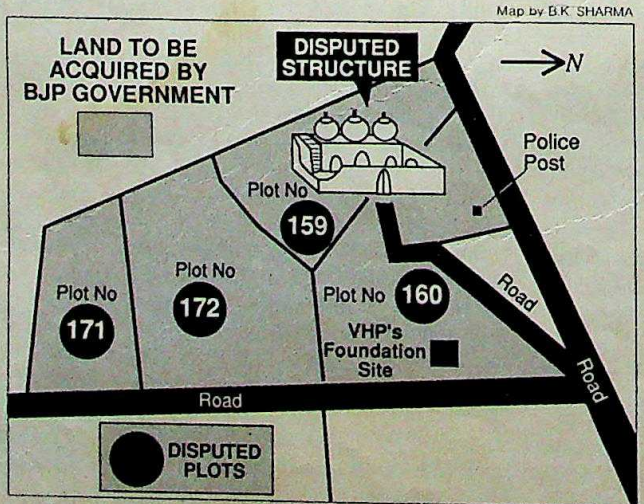
Bhoomi pujan: upping the ante

NOTIFICATION

Legal Wrangle

THE notification waives Section 5A and in the name of 'urgency' allows the Government to deny people the right to object. The district magistrate can acquire the land 15 days after the notification is issued, by which time the compensation and demarcation of the area should be decided. The site plan clearly shows plot no: 160—on which the 1989 shilanyas site is located—to be in the area demarcated for acquisition. Except for the shrine, all the land around falls in the area to be acquired by the state Government. This, the VHP hopes, will be transferred to it.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



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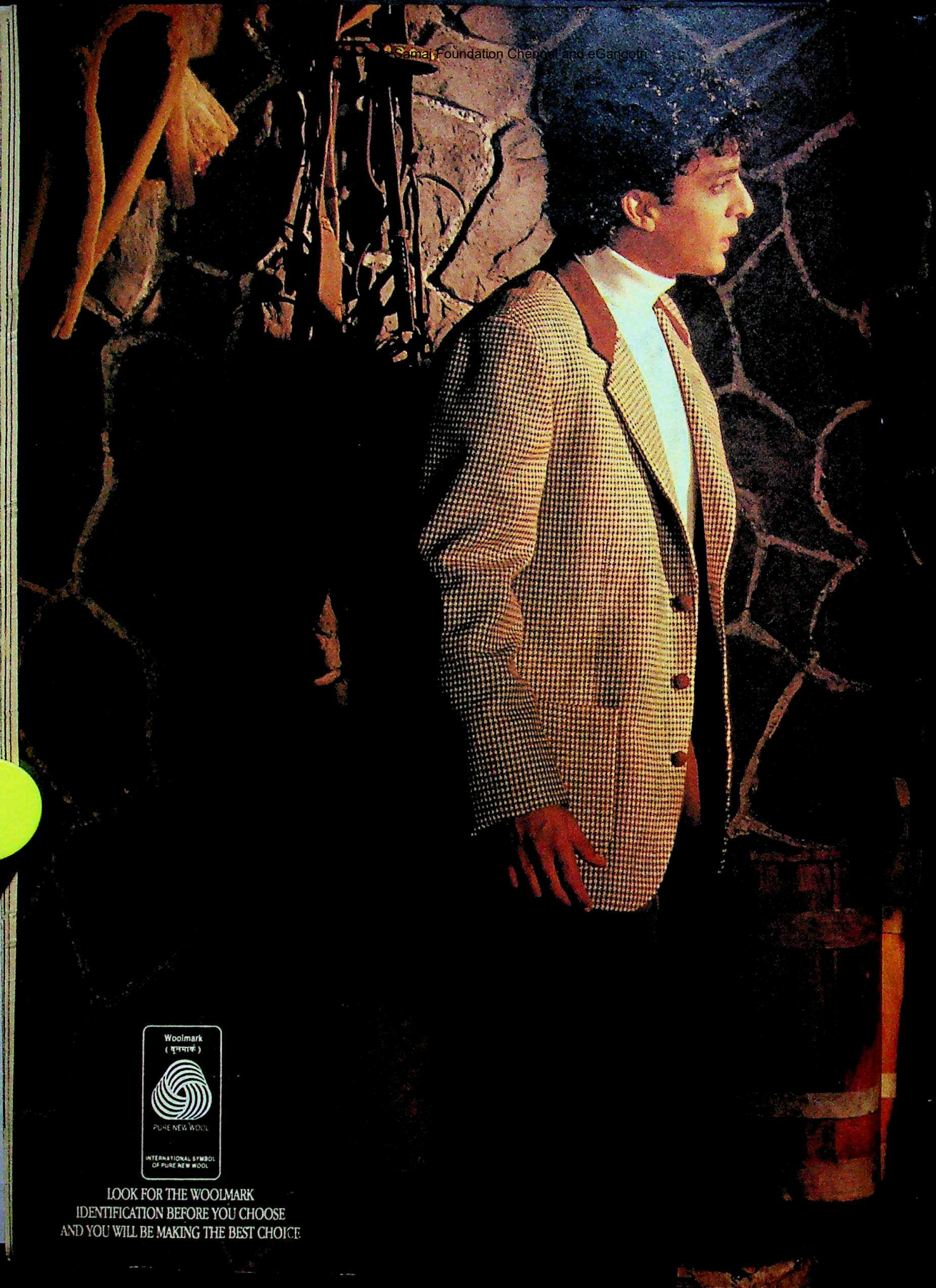

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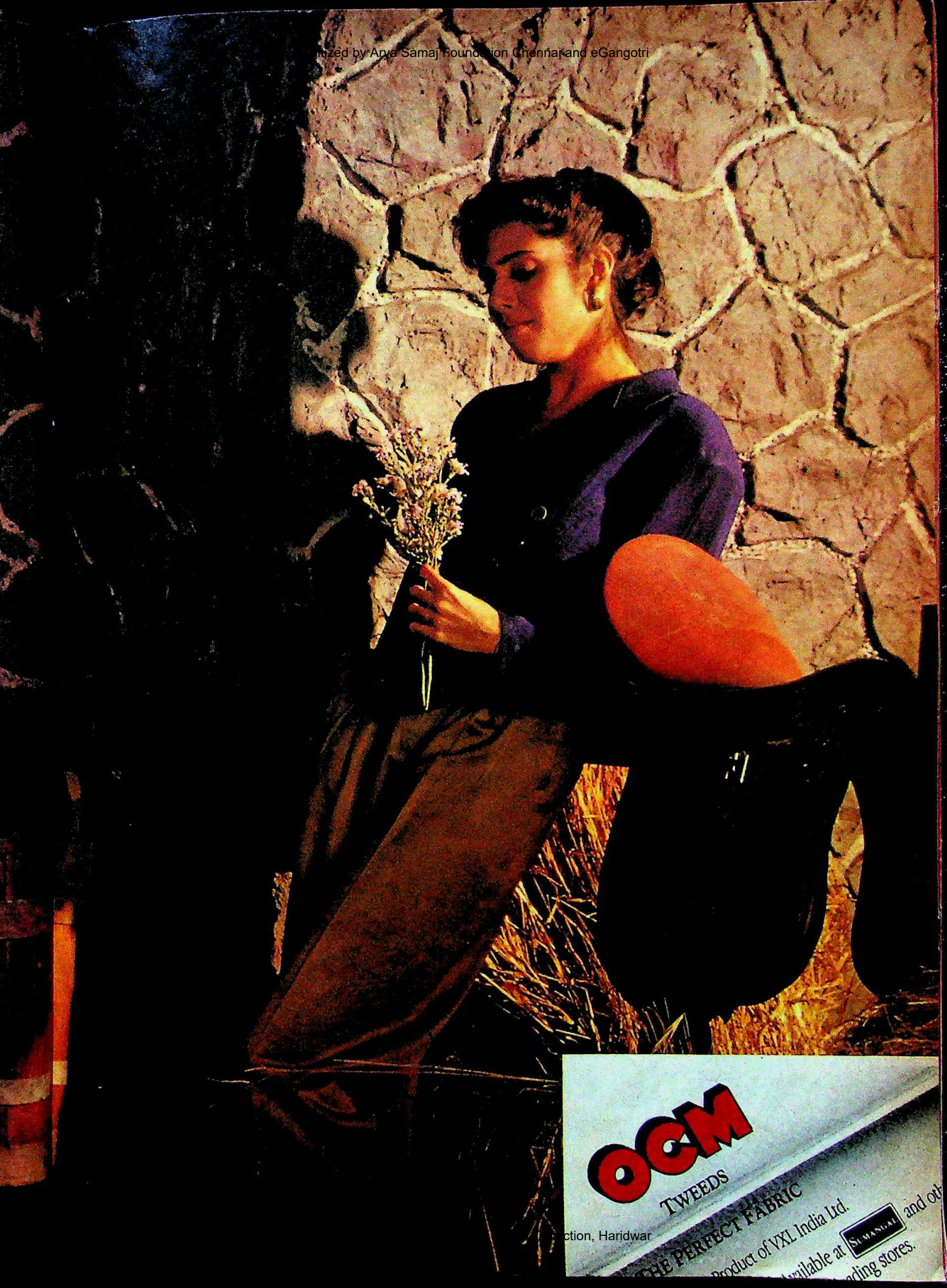

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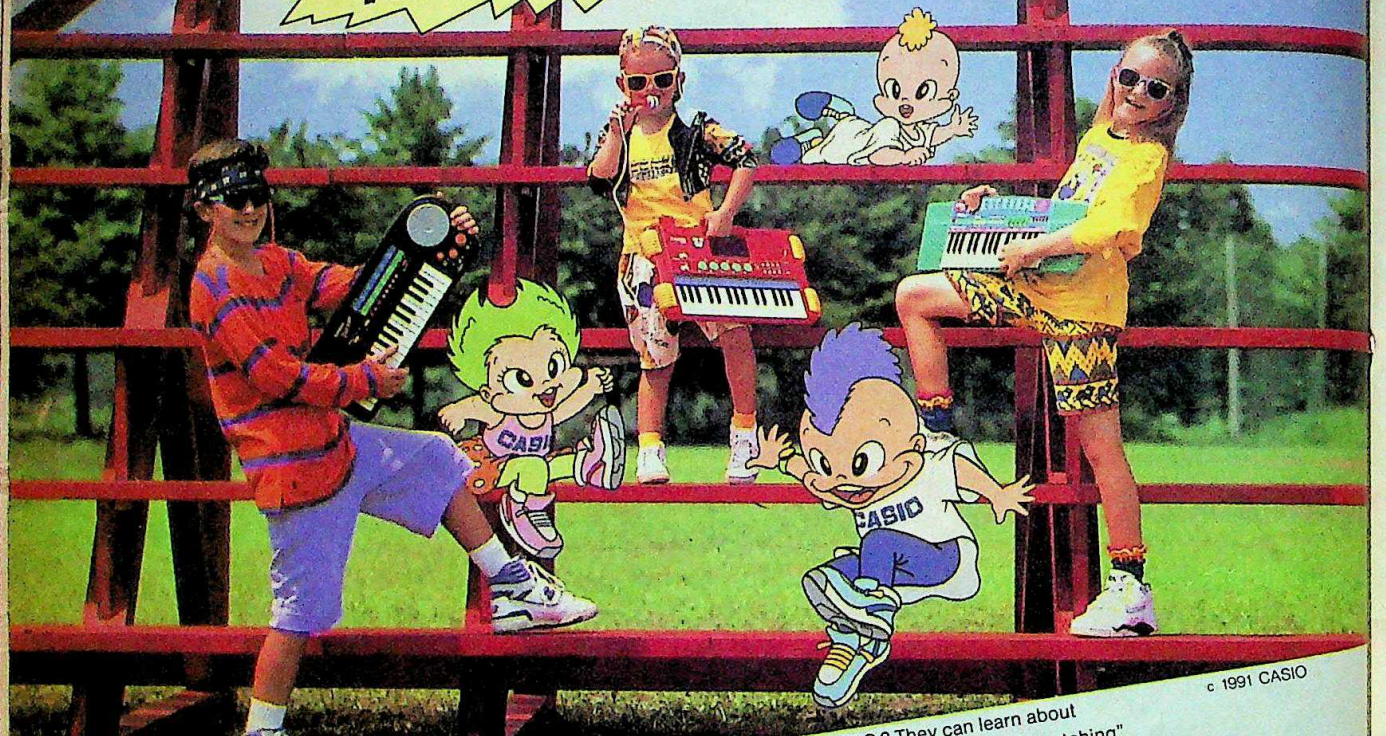

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JANATA DAL

A Suicidal Course

With its organisation in a shambles and its leaders at loggerheads, the party seems increasingly incapable of mounting any challenge at the national level.

By JAVED M. ANSARI

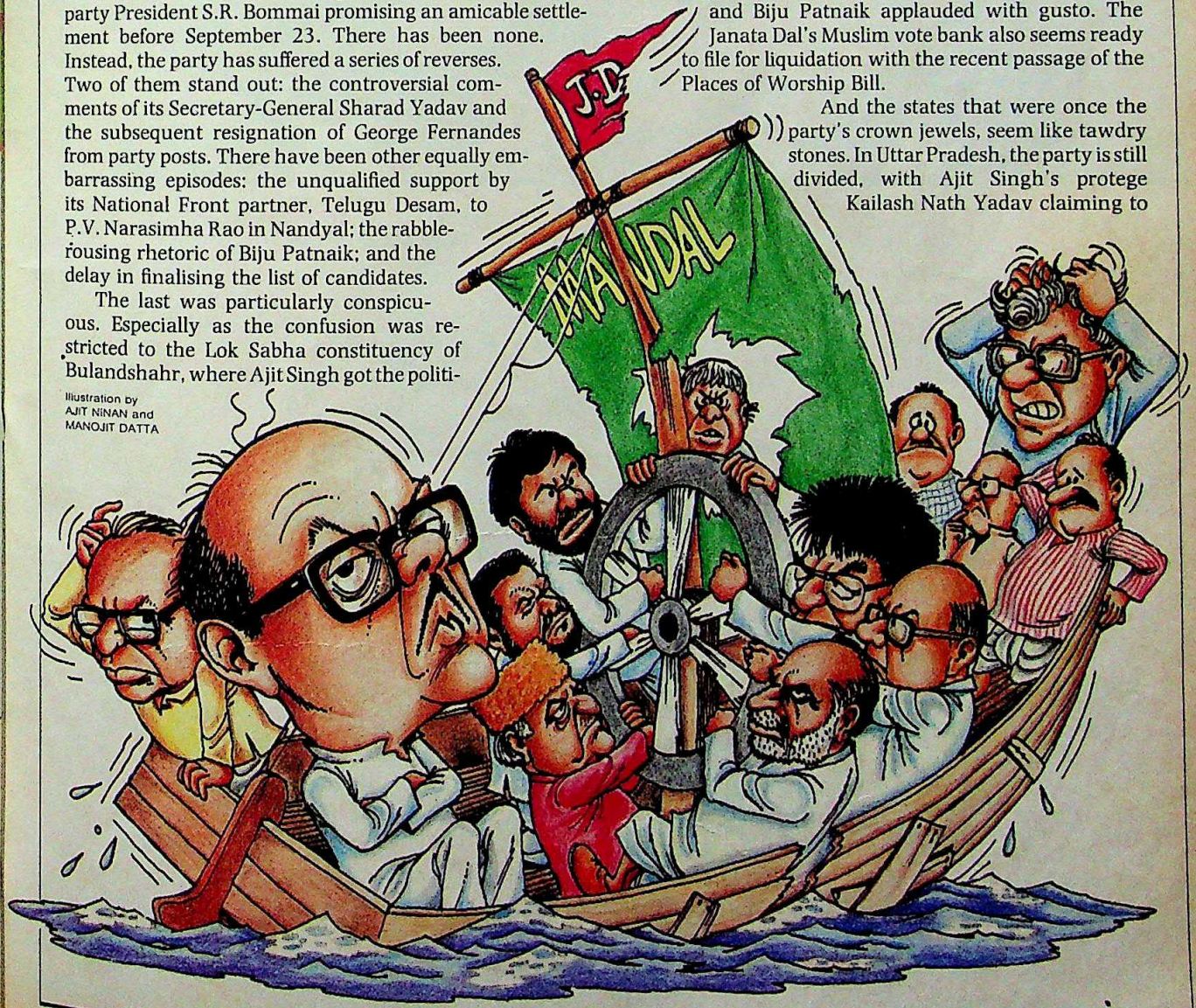
WITH its solitary sail—the Mandal issue—stolen from right under its nose, the Janata Dal boat appears to be a non-starter in the by-election regatta. With too many leaders jostling for too few positions and trapped between V.P. Singh's self-denial and Ajit Singh's self-seeking, the party today is a pale shadow of its original avatar. And by last fortnight, it was clear that its future hangs in the balance.

The party has held two meetings of its national executive after the May-June elections, without achieving much. The last one was called off after day-long confabulations, with party President S.R. Bommai promising an amicable settlement before September 23. There has been none. Instead, the party has suffered a series of reverses. Two of them stand out: the controversial comments of its Secretary-General Sharad Yadav and the subsequent resignation of George Fernandes from party posts. There have been other equally embarrassing episodes: the unqualified support by its National Front partner, Telugu Desam, to P.V. Narasimha Rao in Nandyal; the rabble-rousing rhetoric of Biju Patnaik; and the delay in finalising the list of candidates.

The last was particularly conspicuous. Especially as the confusion was restricted to the Lok Sabha constituency of Bulandshahr, where Ajit Singh got the political affairs committee (PAC) to nominate Kiranpal Singh. He also managed to scuttle the Janata Dal's alliance with the Samajwadi Janata Party. In fact, the talks were doomed from the beginning. The PAC had authorised Fernandes to negotiate with former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. Piqued by Mufti Sayeed's attempts to get a piece of the action, Fernandes threatened to call off the talks if the Mufti was not stopped. But the deal fell through anyway when it came to sharing the spoils.

So if pessimism has gripped the party, it can only be called delayed reaction. While V.P. Singh and company could only wring their hands in despair over the Centre's move on the Mandal issue, Ajit Singh, Ramakrishna Hegde and Biju Patnaik applauded with gusto. The Janata Dal's Muslim vote bank also seems ready to file for liquidation with the recent passage of the Places of Worship Bill.

And the states that were once the party's crown jewels, seem like tawdry stones. In Uttar Pradesh, the party is still divided, with Ajit Singh's protege Kailash Nath Yadav claiming to



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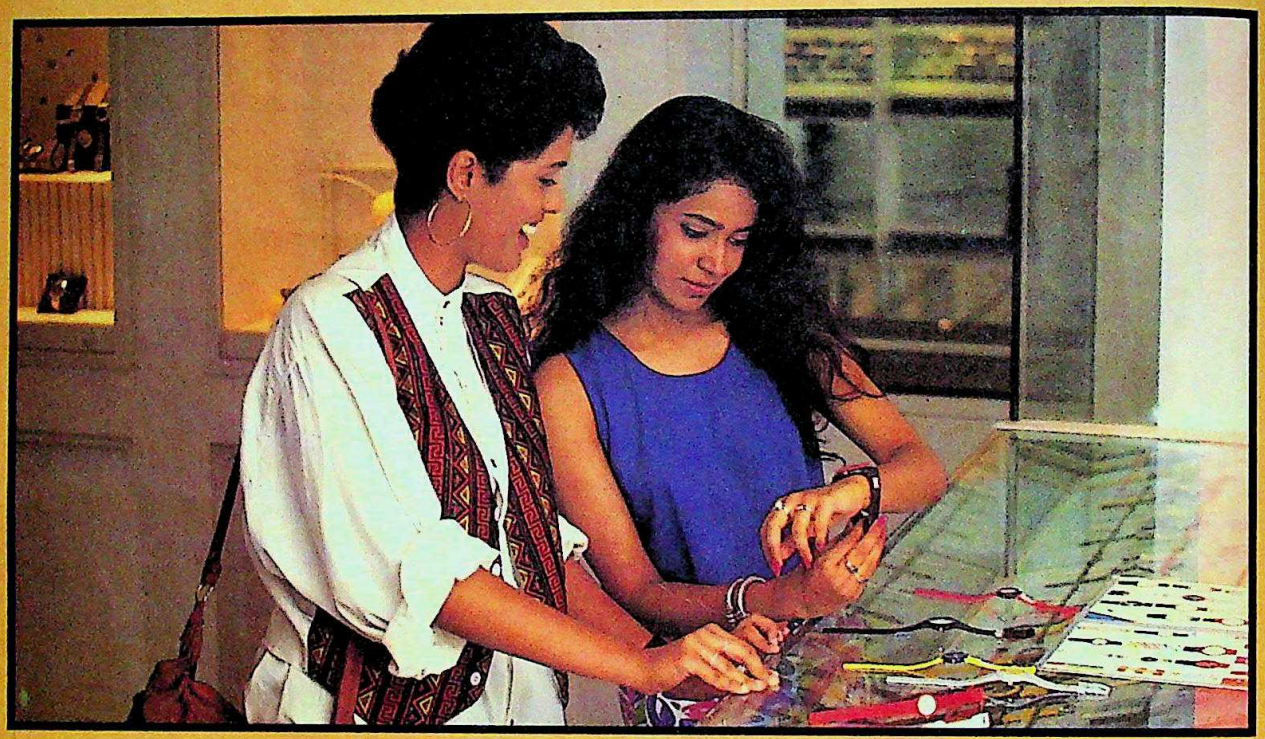

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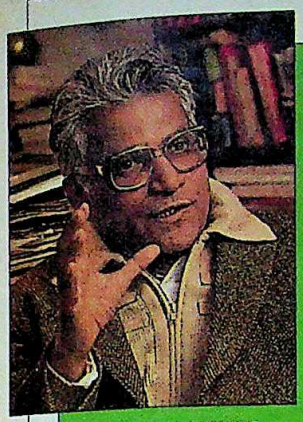


"The party was never a priority. We filled up the slots with big names. Responsibility for failure is collective."

FERNANDES

"We have a tremendous weapon in our philosophy of social justice and secularism, but we lack a good organisation."

PASWAN

be the state unit president and refusing to accept Bommai's nominee Ram Pujan Patel. In Bihar, once its pride, Laloo Prasad Yadav no longer walks tall *(see box)*. In Orissa, Biju Patnaik is a law unto himself, whereas the party units in Karnataka and Maharashtra show no signs of coming alive.

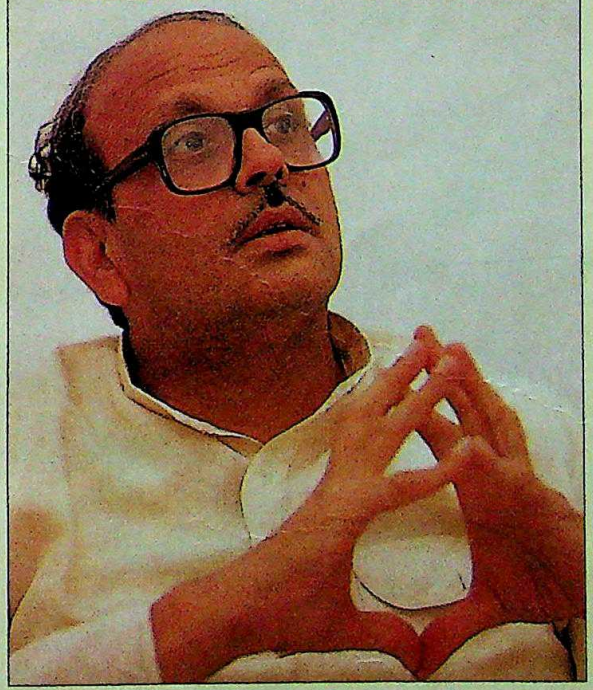
But the most grievous body blow, feel some observers, has been dealt by the reluctance of V.P. Singh to translate rank and file support into authoritative action. And while his frequent offers to step down seem more suitable for a sitcom, his party's organisational set-up has suffered. Points out a disgruntled Fernandes: "The organisation was never the topmost priority. We just filled up the slots with big names." Even the former prime minister's ardent supporter and party Vice-President Ram Vilas Paswan admits: "The party has a tremendous weapon in the form of its philosophy but we lack a well-knit organisation."

The Ajit Singh camp lays the blame for the party's failure to cohese at V.P. Singh's door. Ajit Singh's main grouse is what he perceives is the foisting of Bommai as party chief. His detractors, however, lose little time in pointing out that

BHAWAN SINGH

V.P. SINGH

"There're Problems"



V.P. Singh took time off from a hectic schedule preceding the finalisation of party candidates for the by-elections, to speak to Political Correspondent JAVED M. ANSARI *in New Delhi. Excerpts:*

Q. *What is wrong with the Janata Dal?*

A. It was formed through a peculiar process of bringing together the then existing political groups. Now we are integrating these groups, which is bound to raise some tensions.

Q. *What has been the party's contribution?*

A. Demolishing the theory that the only secular centrist option available was the Congress(I). We also shifted the focus of political debate from personalities to issues. And set the national agenda on social justice.

Q. *Yet, the Janata Dal failed to emerge as a cohesive party.*

A. We had to assimilate people from different parties. Such things do take time. When you try to build on a certain ideological basis, those who do not believe in it will leave.

Q. *You mean Ajit Singh?*

A. I do not discuss names—I'm making a general remark. Commitment to issues, not individuals, is the party's strength.

Q. *Yet, you called it a silly experiment?*

A. That was just an off-the-cuff remark. It was meant more as a joke on myself, and not as a reflection on the party.

Q. *Haven't the ego clashes and squabblings jeopardised the party's future?*

A. There are no ego clashes. Problems are there, but they will be sorted out. It's sad that they have put our performance in the past 100 days in the shade. We forced the Government to bring in the Places of Worship Bill. We forced them to withdraw the moves on the Rajiv Foundation and the fertiliser subsidy.

Q. *Why do non-Congress(I) centrist parties fail to hold together?*

A. There is a difference between the previous experiment and the Janata Dal. We have raised some basic issues. The difference is evident from the fact that after the Janata government's fall, very few partymen were returned to the Lok Sabha, while 56 of our members got elected.

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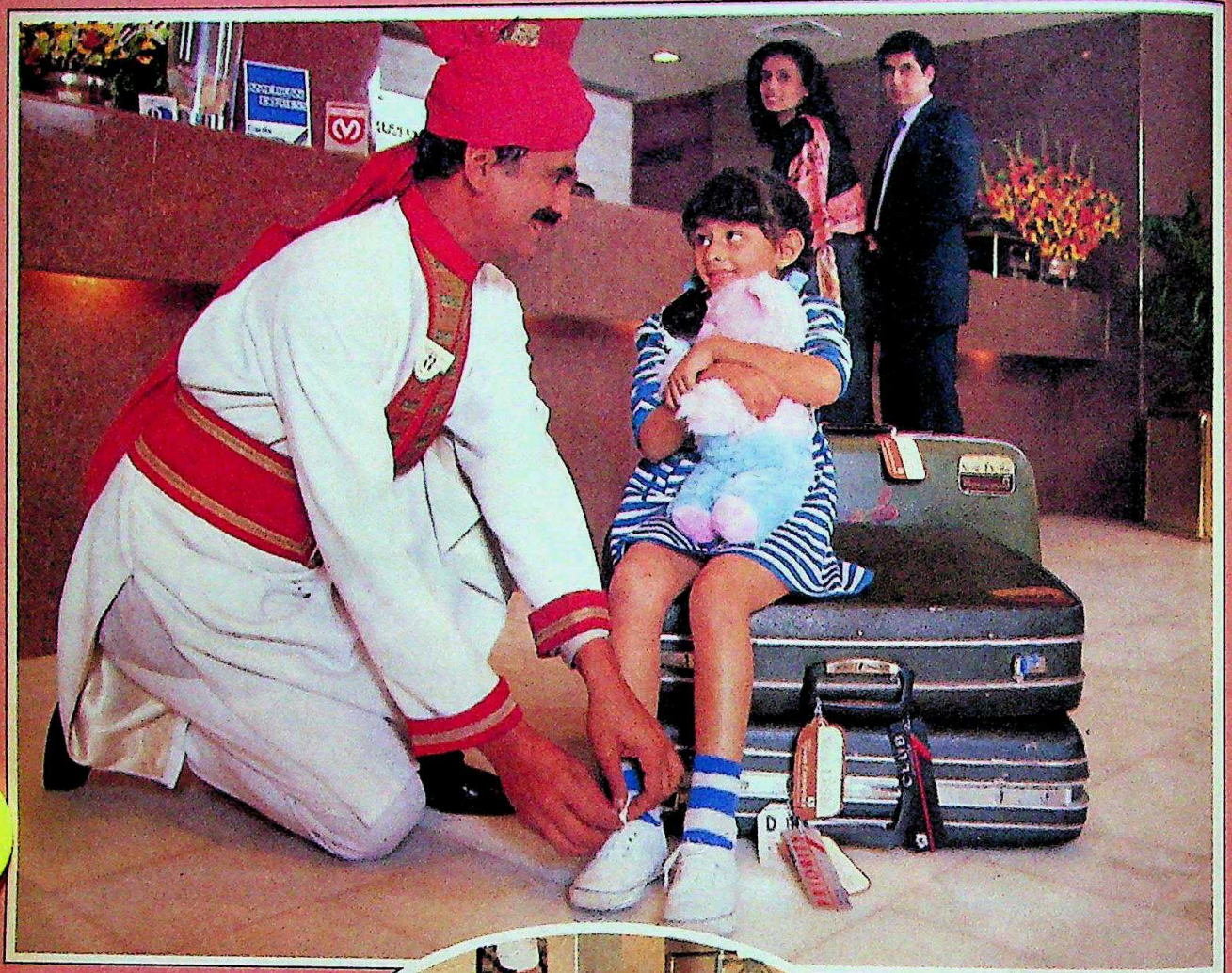

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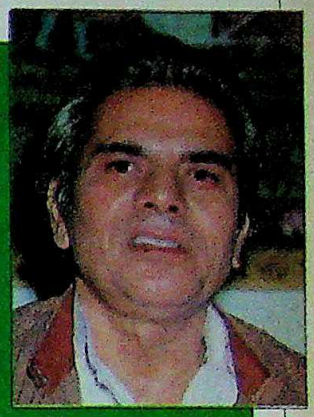
AJIT SINGH

"Our Bihar unit is on fire but we have not sent an observer. Laloo and his ministers contradict each other."

"It is a ship without direction, which might break up. Even its credentials as an opposition party are doubtful."



MADHU LIMAYE

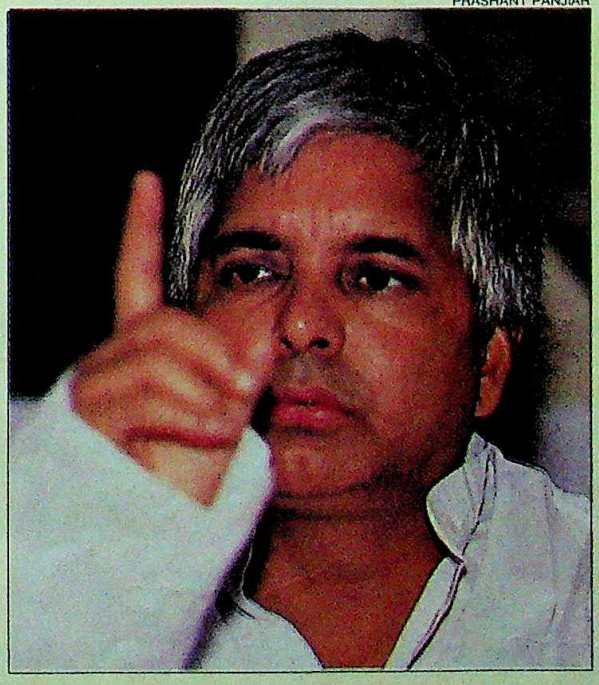
when attempts to reorganise the party were made, it was Ajit Singh who put a spanner in the works. Last year in October, he teamed up with Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan to oppose the appointment of Sharad Yadav as secretary-general while accepting Bommai as chief. Says a Rajya Sabha member: "Once the Janata Dal lost the elections and V.P. Singh was weak, Ajit waged a battle to control the party." A claim that Ajit Singh hotly denies.

It is not the ordinary worker alone who is befuddled by the leaders' somersaults. Veteran socialist Madhu Limaye too despairs: "The party is a directionless ship." And while Fernandes admits the failure of the party he helped found, he also adds that the responsibility is collective. All this is little solace for a sinking ship. ■

BIHAR

Crumbling Citadel

PRASHANT PANJIAR



BIHAR, the only oasis in the Janata Dal desert, may soon become a mirage. Its overlord, Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, is looking distinctly uncomfortable in his fiefdom, as his squabble with state Janata Dal chief Ram Sunder Das acquires the dimensions of a blood feud.

The cauldron almost boiled over with last fortnight's meeting of 35 dissidents—including 22 ministers—called by Minister of Cooperation Ramdeo Singh Yadav and Yadav leaders Anup Lal Yadav and Vinayak Prasad Yadav. When Laloo tried to secure denials from those who attended the meeting, only a few obliged. Now Laloo's ministers and other Janata Dal legislators are openly hob-nobbing with Das, who seems ready to become Ajit Singh's Trojan horse.

For the first time, Laloo appears to be faltering. Earlier rumbles of discontent had been gagged by his strong-armed savvy. After the party split at the national level in December last year, Laloo accommodated potential rebels by making room for 62 more in his ministry. Then, a month ago, Laloo appointed 41 chairmen and vice-chairmen to state-run corporations. Among the beneficiaries were 38 legislators.

But in buying short-term peace, Laloo may have sold his long-term prosperity. The appointments of Congress(I) leader Radhanandan Jha and Inder Singh Namdhari—who broke with the BJP to join the Janata Dal—angered the rebels. Then, Public Relations Minister M. Sulaiman had to face a probe for police firing on flood victims in Kishanganj district. Unjustly so, felt many dissidents. They have now let the central leaders know that if Laloo is not removed, the party will break up. Former minister Ashok Singh claims that 35 ministers will soon quit. Laloo is braving this ill wind with characteristic bluster. Rajya Sabha member Ranjan Yadav has threatened that the party will split if Laloo is edged out. But bowing to pressure from the central leadership, Laloo had to offer Sharad Yadav the Lok Sabha seat of Madhepura. If Sharad Yadav wins, backward castes may rally around him. If he loses, it will be considered an affront to the chief minister.

Laloo appears to have been subdued by the central leaders' stance. Says he: "I have no differences with Das and no minister will be dropped. My colleagues have confidence in me." Not many would agree with the assertion. —FARZAND AHMED

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Look no further...

GRAVIERA GR SUITING

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CHOGM

A New Awareness

The Indian prime minister plays a key role in forging a consensus on an issue which could have divided the movement.

By ARUN CHACKO in Harare

THE setting was appropriate enough. Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, the mineral-rich country founded by arch colonial Cecil Rhodes. For all that, it was something of an anachronism to find leaders of one quarter of humanity abandoning pressing domestic problems to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Harare, simply because decades ago their countries had been part of the British Empire.

Unless, of course, the reason was Harare, Zimbabwe's exquisitely maintained capital. Five-thousand ft above sea level, the city once called Salisbury was ablaze with jacaranda and flame of the forest. Western influences remain strong in a city plucked straight out of Europe, though its white population is less than half of what it was at its colonial peak with the blacks mainly confined to poverty-ridden ghettos on the outskirts of the city.

The hosts, however, seemed determined to pull out the stops for the deliberations. The huge, luxurious, flower bedecked auditorium, something of an engineering marvel, can accommodate enormous numbers in seats soaring to the ceiling. It was built and gifted to the country by Yugoslavia—now in danger of breaking up—for a non-aligned conference.

The irony did not end there. Turning history on its head, at the end of a week of hectic parleying, private bilateral meetings, and a sensible Harare Declaration, the Commonwealth movement emerged more unified than at the last summit in Kuala Lampur where then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher antagonised the majority of Commonwealth leaders with her uncompromising approach. Representing over 40 countries, the movement seemed poised to become a

THE HARARE DECLARATION

- **Promotion of democratic institutions, observance of human rights and maintenance of the rule of law.**
- **No linkage of the human rights and democratic record of governments of member-states with foreign aid to boost developing economies.**
- **A permanent halt to development and testing of all types of nuclear weapons.**
- **Curbs on conventional weapons buildup beyond legitimate limits of national self-defence.**
- **Discrimination of all kinds to be scrupulously combated by all member-states of the Commonwealth.**

The colourful opening ceremony at the Harare summit: forging new links

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ARUN CHACKO

Rao with Nawaz Sharif: understanding mutual concerns

more relevant body in a world where post-war power blocs have crumbled.

In fact, there was much more meeting of minds between those holding differing positions in Harare. The Commonwealth's unique position stemmed from its members who are from the G-7 countries, the EEC, ASEAN, the Groups of 15 and 77, and the dying Non-Aligned Movement. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd recognised that when he told INDIA TODAY that the positions within the Commonwealth were not unbridgeable. One-time socialist Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley, admitted: "The world has changed. My position has changed."

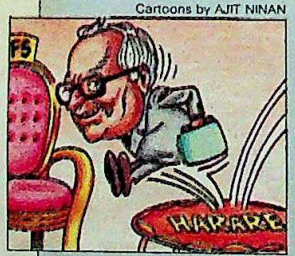
Leaders like Manley, the charismatic Nelson Mandela and the dapper Malaysian Premier, Mahathir Mohammed, stole the show with their erudite approach and sense of humour. But few could have been more satisfied than the Indian Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao.

Though he skipped the retreat at the picturesque Victoria Falls—his early departure was a tribute to his success. The most contentious issue was the stand taken by leaders of the developed world led by Canada's Brian Mulroney to link aid to human rights and democratic reform. But Rao played a key role in clinching the issue during the conference itself. The final Harare Declaration incorporated India's position, retaining a balance between the need for development and technical cooperation on the one hand, and democratic reforms and human rights on the other.

Not that the prime minister didn't make any bloomers. Questioned about lifting sporting sanctions against South Africa, he confidently declared that was old hat as the country was playing the one-day cricket tournament currently under way in Sharjah. That was clearly incorrect. Rao's response to a Pakistani journalist's question on mutual troop withdrawal was also embarrassingly inept.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



■ **India had by far the largest delegation of officials, security people and journalists. Cars earmarked for Indian delegates and support staff dominated the CHOGM venue. No country had even half as many, generating considerable adverse comment.**

■ **The presence of the Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, J.N. Dixit, rather than Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey, was significant. The obvious indication was that he is ahead in the race for the foreign secretary's job which falls vacant in November.**

■ **Irrespective of his busy schedule and heavy security, Rao managed to slip away and do some private shopping. Naturally, only an Indian shop would do, this one specialising in copper products. Rao's choice: coffee tables with wildlife motifs.**

But Rao's overall performance flew in the face of all expectation. He went to the conference largely an unknown quantity and in the long shadow of the scions of the charismatic Nehru-Gandhi family. More so, considering the moving tributes paid to Rajiv Gandhi. In a rare gesture, the conference observed a minute's silence as homage to Rajiv's contribution to the movement. Rao clearly had a tough act to follow.

Yet his low-key, but articulate, exposition of the dangers of the first world stand and his forceful stand on the position and problems of the majority of the Commonwealth nations, marked a major turning point in the deliberations. A host of successive speakers including Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif publicly endorsed his position, much to the discomfort of the delegation from Islamabad. The official CHOGM spokesman, Patsy Robertson, described Rao's remarks as "profound". Rao's final satisfaction, however, came with a successful one-and-a-half hour meeting with Nawaz Sharif. As Rao said: "We have a good understanding of each other's concerns."

Against the backdrop of the dizzying international changes, the Commonwealth Club managed to paper over potentially damaging differences. And, with Britain no longer governed by the domineering Margaret Thatcher but the open-minded John Major, CHOGM is clearly poised to play a, well.., major role in world affairs. ■

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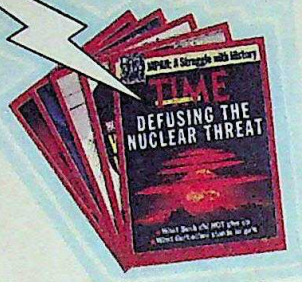
THE POWER OF TIME



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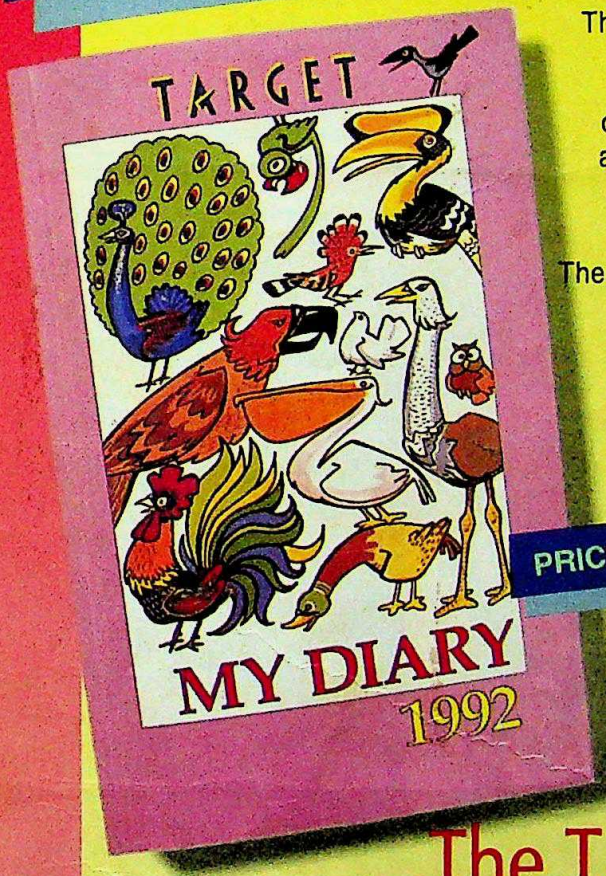

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CINEMA TURNS SEXY

Films become increasingly raunchy, ribald and explicit

By MADHU JAIN

SCENE: Jackie Shroff caresses a swanky red car while Sangeeta Bijlani is draped languidly over it. "*Kya bumper hai, kya body hai....Kabhi aage jaati, kabhi pichay,*" sings the hero, referring ostensibly to the car. But the audience knows better. It also knows there's more to come. The hero breaks into a suggestive dance, thrusting his pelvis back and forth while the camera focuses on his groin.

Later, watching the rushes of *Lakshman Rekha* flicker past on the screen, Jackie puts his head in his hands, genuinely embarrassed. "I suppose I'll just fast forward it on my video," he mumbles. But the film world murmurs: "Even Jackie's done it."

Welcome to the new world of Dirty Dancing. And this is just for starters. The heaving and panting are just part of the changes now sweeping Hindi cinema and steaming up the screen. The dream machine is increasingly becoming the sex machine. Stars and starlings now gyrate, strip, smoulder, pout, bump-and-grind, clinch, rape and deliver dialogues loaded with double-meanings. It's 'show' time, folks.

"What you secretly desired to see is now coming out in the open," says director Manmohan Desai. Less and less is being left to the imagination, according to veteran film maker Kidar Sharma, 82, who introduced stars like Geeta Bali, Madhubala and Raj Kapoor, and is still making films. "It's quite disgusting. Cinema has become naked and romance crude," says Sharma.

While 'clean' popcorn romances like *Sanam Bewafa* and *Saajan* break many records, the bulk of the movies being churned out have increasing dollops of sex. And then there are the "sex movies", of which there were 75 in Hindi last year, according to a *Trade Guide* editorial. This year is much the same. *Garam Jawani, Mohabbat Ki Khushboo, Anjam Hawas Ka, Pyasi Apsara*.... The prurient titles say it all.

Even Shashi Kapoor, who seldom blushes, finds the present lot of films distasteful. "It's quite nauseating. Films are getting cheaper. I see sex and violence in full swing." And often, together. In this year's rage, *Phool Bane Angarey*, Rekha is raped while her handcuffed husband looks on helplessly. And in *Vishkanya*, Satish Kaushik peels a banana while he lurches towards Moon Moon Sen to rape her, even as her daughter, the young Pooja Bedi, peeps from the cupboard. In *Parinda*, Anil Kapoor and Madhuri Dixit are in bed—they've just made love—when a gunman enters and sprays them with bullets in a climactic confluence of passion and gore the new buzzwords in Bollywood.

It was, one could say, inevitable. Cinema is the moving mirror of the times. And they have changed. The biggest shift has been in the composition of the audience in cinema halls. The front benchers—those who go to whis-

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tle and leer at double entendres and bare skins—now extend to the dress gallery, while the more genteel folk stay home and watch video. Women and children are occasional visitors to cinema halls.

The halls are now overflowing with young men who want something new, exciting and fast-paced. "The new generation wants *hangama*. Films have to be sexy, they have to be full of life and energy. Raw energy," says producer-director Raj Kumar Kohli.

Coyness is out. This audience wants its pounds of flesh, jaded as it is by all the X-rated films inundating video libraries and parlours. A decade ago, even a kiss on the screen was the ultimate forbidden fruit. But today the video invasion—some of it pure porn—has fuelled the collective imagination.

(From left) Jackie and Sangeeta in *Lakshman Rekha;* Dimple in *Drishti;* and Pooja Bedi in *Vishkanya*: all upfront

RK film without a heroine drenched in a waterfall, they asked."

In the age of video and fast forward, there's greater emphasis on the power of form. And fast-paced quickies. "We now want moment-to-moment gratification. Films have now become a series of sensations. The immediacy and the push of the moment is what has become important," says actor-director Shekhar Kapur. Adds Mehra: "People want *masala* movies. It's like McDonald's—you say, give us a hamburger, french-fries, make it spicy and pack it up."

Packaged love has to be instant. The gap between the first sighting and the clinch has dwindled to one reel. Until as late as the early '80s it took several reels for the boy and girl to even touch. That ineffable Indian quality, *sharam*, came in between. And so did *nakhra*—the prolonged no which ended up meaning yes, but only well after the interval. Today, there's no time for such niceties.

Certainly, life is moving in fourth gear. It's just not the birds and the bees off-screen. Whether it's newspapers, magazines, advertisements—especially the condom ads even over Doordarshan—or couples on the streets, parks and beaches, sexuality is more palpable. More visible. More intrusive. Also more discussable.

heroine has usurped the role of the vamp and sent her packing. The hero has taken on shades of the villain. And cabarets have given way to pub scenes.

INVASION OF THE NYTs

They are bold, bare and blase

HELPING boost the trend are the New Young Things—NYTS—swarming tinsel-town. Trapped in a never-stopping revolving door, the dare-bare guys-and-dolls pumping up the temperature of Bollywood drop their clothes and inhibitions at the whirr of a camera. It's instant cheesecake. "I don't mind showing my body because it's not ugly, it's rather nice," says Jyotsana Singh, the starlet-to-be soon to be unveiled in the *Tridev* follow-up, *Viswatma*.

The Shilpas, Sheebas, Jyotsanas, Poojas, Dollys talk openly about their after-hours lives. And the Rahuls, Chunkys, Salmans, Sunnys, Akshays don't find anything wrong in flaunting their bodies. "If you have it, flaunt it," says Sunjay Dutt. Consequently, there's a lot more skin showing on screen. Legs and bosoms bounce in slow motion. Male NYTS strip down to the waist—the younger lot of fledgling He-Men in leather pants which almost look spray-painted—showing off their oiled and glistening muscles.

The NYTS are as practical as they are ambitious. And professional. "These new actresses negotiate how much they will expose according to how much you are willing to pay them," says director Shashilal Nair.

Confidence washes away inconvenient inhibitions. Exposing, a much-feared word for a generation gone by, is simpler as long as there is justification.

"What you always secretly desired to see on the screen is at last coming out in the open."

MANMOHAN DESAI

ways exuded passion, and later he learnt to overtly exploit the raw sexuality of his heroines. Kidar Sharma, the man who introduced him to films, says he "had a way with the censors". He would go to see them with a two-day-old stubble and with tears in his eyes. It usually worked.

In the '50s the great Nargis-Raj starrers had the screen crackling with passion. In the '60s there was Vyjanthimala in *Sangam*, Padmini in *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai*. Then in *Mera Naam Joker* he had Simi Garewal's wet frock plastered to her upper thighs. In the '70s Raj's camera crept up the legs of Dimple in *Bobby*. A watershed was *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* where the cameras lingered lasciviously on Zeenat Aman's cleavage and curves. In the '80s came his wet-and-tell swansong *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* in which Mandakini exposed her breasts.

Raj got away because his sensuality had a context. Today he is widely imitated. But the master knew what passion was; his successors only know its motions.

don't mind stripping even totally," declares Chunky Pandey who specialises in a-shockable-quote-a-minute.

Heroes earlier were either conservative or didn't quite have the physique to unbutton their shirts in front of the camera. "You never saw Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand, Shammi Kapoor or even Amitabh Bachchan bare-torsoed," says Shashi Kapoor. "Dharmendra reluctantly showed his body in *Phool Aur Pathar* and I did in *Jeevan Sangarsh*. And Raj Kapoor wore a swimming costume for the first and last time in *Awara*."

Now it's becoming the norm because Hollywood is calling the shots, explains Desai. Rambo triggered off the shirt-dropping. Amitabh Bachchan could be macho by just tying a knot with his red shirt in *Deewar*. But now the new breed is pumping iron in health clubs and, increasingly, in their own private gyms. Some are even black belts in karate. Fitness is all. "Sometimes, physiques are substitutes for performance," says Shekhar Kapur.

And women have even started making passes at men. In *Saajan*, for instance, Madhuri Dixit on her bicycle crashes into Salman Khan. Those long eyelashes don't lower demurely. She stares back, appraisingly. In *Dil*, she takes the initiative and plants a kiss on Aamir Khan's cheek. Contrast this with

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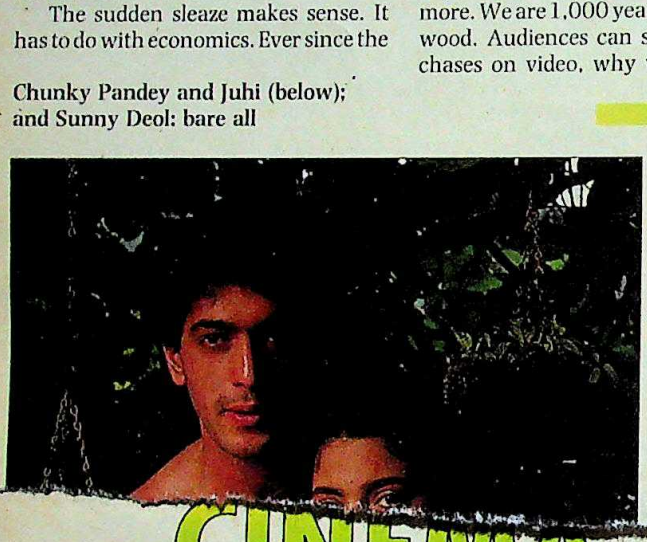
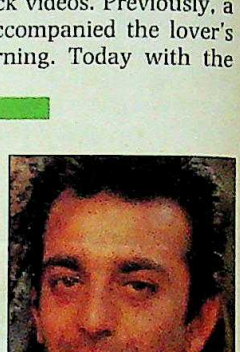


Chunky Pandey and Juhi (below); and Sunny Deol: bare all

"If you have a great body which can be displayed, then I don't think there's anything wrong in flaunting it."
SUNJAY DUTT



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"What you secretly desired to see is now coming out in the open," says director Manmohan Desai. Less and less us?" Rajiv Rai, for instance, spent nearly Rs 4 crore on *Viswatma*—he blew up six cars on location in Nairobi.

Moreover, music which has become the unchallenged siren of cinema halls, fits in more easily with the romantic than it does with the action genre. The major hits—*Dil, Saajan, Aashiqui*—in the past couple of years were music-laden. Musicals are convenient Trojan horses for the erotic. And technology a good accomplice. Sighs and heavy-breathing invade the soundtrack, courtesy the electronic synthesiser, and easily-available rock videos. Previously, a lone sarangi accompanied the lover's lament or yearning. Today with the *Bane Angarey*, Rekha is raped while her handcuffed husband looks on helplessly. And in *Vishkanya*, Satish Kaushik peels a banana while he lurches towards Moon Moon Sen to rape her, even as her daughter, the young Pooja Bedi, peeps from the cupboard. In *Parinda*, Anil Kapoor and Madhuri Dixit are in bed—they've just made love—when a gunman enters and sprays them with bullets in a climactic confluence of passion and gore the new buzzwords in Bollywood.

It was, one could say, inevitable. Cinema is the moving mirror of the times. And they have changed. The biggest shift has been in the composition of the audience in cinema halls. The front benchers—those who go to whis-

Some tend to fall back on the age-old trick of saying that the script requires it. Others, who belong to a growing tribe of svelte bimbos led by Pooja Bedi, revel in their sensuality.

Many of the NYTS can't act. But that doesn't matter in the hurly-burly of the frenzied world of film making in which every producer wants something new. What the heroines of yesteryear said with their eyes, their successors are now trying to say with their bodies. "Talent," as Shashilal Nair puts it succinctly, "has moved below the shoulder."

The sudden sleaze makes sense. It has to do with economics. Ever since the *Maine Pyar Kiya* blitzkreig, everybody started making love stories. There are over 140 of them already canned—many lying unsold—and each featuring at least one new name. Another 200-odd treacle-and-mush extravaganzas are on the studio floors. So producers need oomph. Making sexy films has become easier and cheaper—the NYTS charge much less and have fewer inhibitions than the older, established stars. Romance, according to Desai who's detouring from his *Mard* genre, is less expensive: "Action movies cost much more. We are 1,000 years behind Hollywood. Audiences can see the best car chases on video, why would they see

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keyboards there's panting, thumping, heavy breathing and heart beats—adding to the impact of the visuals.

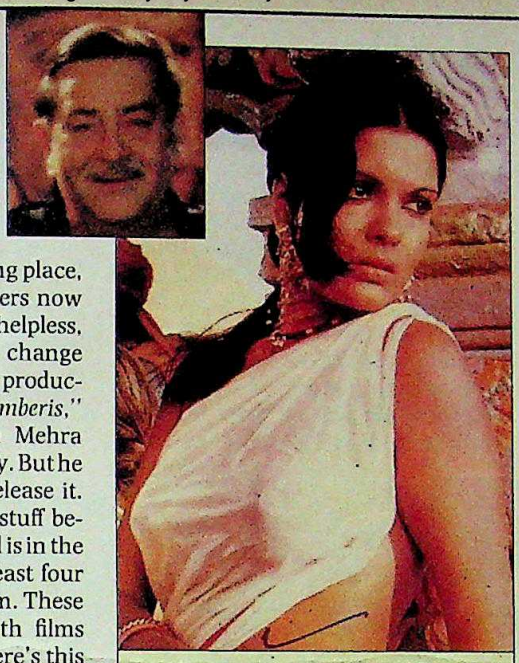
The big change is in the men behind the cameras. The money men, many of them fly-by-night producers. There is a change of guard taking place, while the older lot of film-makers now seems to be standing by, helpless, watching the world of cinema change colour. "Ninety per cent of the producers are smugglers and *dus numberis*," says an exasperated Prakash Mehra whose film *Zindagi Ek Jua* is ready. But he hasn't yet found theatres to release it. Exhibitors prefer the smuttier stuff because it comes cheaper. The ball is in the exhibitor's court who has at least four new films a week to choose from. These intruders are just playing with films according to Mehra. "Look, there's this man who has Rs 50 lakh to spare. If the film doesn't work, it doesn't bother him. At least the new girl will be good in bed."

Distributors, too, insist increasingly on "sexy scenes". Randhir Kapoor had a hard time before the release of *Henna*, convincing them that *this* Raj Kapoor production could not show a drenched nubile young thing. "They wanted Zeba under a waterfall. How could there be an RK film without a heroine drenched in a waterfall, they asked."

In the age of video and fast forward, there's greater emphasis on the power of form. And fast-paced quickies. "We now want moment-to-moment gratification. Films have now become a series of sensations. The immediacy and the push of the moment is what has become important," says actor-director Shekhar Kapur. Adds Mehra: "People want *masala* movies. It's like McDonald's—you say, give us a hamburger, french-fries, make it spicy and pack it up."

Packaged love has to be instant. The gap between the first sighting and the clinch has dwindled to one reel. Until as late as the early '80s it took several reels for the boy and girl to even touch. That ineffable Indian quality, *sharam*, came in between. And so did *nakhra*—the prolonged no which ended up meaning yes, but only well after the interval. Today, there's no time for such niceties.

Certainly, life is moving in fourth gear. It's just not the birds and the bees off-screen. Whether it's newspapers, magazines, advertisements—especially the condom ads even over Doordarshan—or couples on the streets, parks and beaches, sexuality is more palpable. More visible. More intrusive. Also more discussable.



Zeenat Aman in Satyam Shivam Sundaram and (inset) Raj Kapoor

The Pioneer

THE man who started it all, and got away with it was Raj Kapoor. His films always exuded passion, and later he learnt to overtly exploit the raw sexuality of his heroines. Kidar Sharma, the man who introduced him to films, says he "had a way with the censors". He would go to see them with a two-day-old stubble and with tears in his eyes. It usually worked.

In the '50s the great Nargis-Raj starrers had the screen crackling with passion. In the '60s there was Vyjanthimala in *Sangam*, Padmini in *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai*. Then in *Mera Naam Joker* he had Simi Garewal's wet frock plastered to her upper thighs. In the '70s Raj's camera crept up the legs of Dimple in *Bobby*. A watershed was *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* where the cameras lingered lasciviously on Zeenat Aman's cleavage and curves. In the '80s came his wet-and-tell swansong *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* in which Mandakini exposed her breasts.

Raj got away because his sensuality had a context. Today he is widely imitated. But the master knew what passion was; his successors only know its motions.

Romance has become a "street thing", according to director Sawan Kumar Tak, coming out from the four walls of a room to the streets and gardens. "The sacred charm of love is lost. *Pyar* was puja, now *pyar* is fun." It also has to do with changing morals—or at least public stances. "Everybody's having an affair. If you say you are a virgin today, people think you're abnormal," says starlet Kiran Joneja.

Till now, the woman was always the only object of desire in Hindi cinema. The camera lingered on her face and elsewhere. And she revealed, while the male stood by, drooling and fully-clothed. Today, the roles have merged.

MALE AS SEX OBJECT

Macho and an exhibitionist

NOW it's also the hero who's doing the Madonna act. He's not quite pouting yet. But he's certainly showing his belly button. The camera lingers over Salman Khan's shirtless torso in *Maine Pyar Kiya*. Sunny Deol, who started it all, goes through a large part of his films without his shirt on. Jackie Shroff, Chunky Pandey, Sunjay Dutt and some of the younger macho men have the muscles and like showing them. "I don't mind stripping even totally," declares Chunky Pandey who specialises in a-shockable-quote-a-minute.

Heroes earlier were either conservative or didn't quite have the physique to unbutton their shirts in front of the camera. "You never saw Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand, Shammi Kapoor or even Amitabh Bachchan bare-torsoed," says Shashi Kapoor. "Dharmendra reluctantly showed his body in *Phool Aur Pathar* and I did in *Jeevan Sangarsh*. And Raj Kapoor wore a swimming costume for the first and last time in *Awara*."

Now it's becoming the norm because Hollywood is calling the shots, explains Desai. Rambo triggered off the shirt-dropping. Amitabh Bachchan could be macho by just tying a knot with his red shirt in *Deewar*. But now the new breed is pumping iron in health clubs and, increasingly, in their own private gyms. Some are even black belts in karate. Fitness is all. "Sometimes, physiques are substitutes for performance," says Shekhar Kapur.

And women have even started making passes at men. In *Saajan*, for instance, Madhuri Dixit on her bicycle crashes into Salman Khan. Those long eyelashes don't lower demurely. She stares back, appraisingly. In *Dil*, she takes the initiative and plants a kiss on Aamir Khan's cheek. Contrast this with

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poor Sadhana whose heart went aflutter when she bumped into Rajendra Kumar in *Mere Mehboob*. Or with *Pakeezah*, where Raaj Kumar only has to see Meena Kumari's foot to spin out his obsessive love story.

The NYTS are rushing in as the old stars begin to fade. These are He-Men whose images are often built on their sexuality. Whatever the Bachchans, Jeetendras and Rajesh Khannas did was behind a curtain of discretion. Whereas, lives of stars like Sunjay Dutt, Sunny Deol and Jackie Shroff sometimes echo their screen persona. And louder echoes appear in the film magazines.

The hero has become a pin-up. *Debonair* started it. *Stardust* had Jackie Shroff with nothing but an eagle painted on his chest. Yet another had him with a cap as fig-leaf. To look more beefcakey, they oil their bodies and then put drops of water on the muscles to make them glisten. *Movie* magazine recently carried a feature showing the macho men and their magnificent muscles. Women readers had written in asking for the feature. Says *Movie* Editor Dinesh Raheja: "Women are finally asserting their voyeuristic rights. The feedback to the article was fabulous."

In fact, film magazines have become Peeping Toms and Janes. And they are a barometer of the rising temperature of the cinema world. "Earlier they were in our drawing-rooms, now they have entered our bedrooms," says Randhir Kapoor. Hence: "I want to satisfy my man to the core," says Ektaa in bold print. "I have to show off my personal assets and not those of my maid," says Pooja Bedi. Even Mahesh Bhatt pronounces that he doesn't mind what his daughter does as long as she doesn't get pregnant.

Certainly, there's been a sea-change in topics. Suddenly, homosexuality amongst the stars has become a hot topic. While one magazine even had the stars discuss the topic, *Cine Blitz* published an article on the homosexual relationship of two leading actors—no names but people guessed.

The reason for the sensationalism is the fact that there are many more film magazines in the market. The one-upmanship amongst the scribes makes the journals increasingly yellow. "Today, film journalism is a different brand," says Hilla Sethna, veteran film journalist. "There's no film in it. Nor is there any journalism involved."

Naturally, directors and audiences are happy with the collapse of traditional values and the cool matter-of-fact

"Once, actresses like Madhubala and Nargis used their eyes to emote. Now we use our limbs. As a sort of body language."

MADHURI DIXIT

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attitude developing amongst the new breed. Even someone like Sheeba, who took on an ordinary-girl role in Sunil Dutt's *Yeh Aag Kab Bujhegi*, had to unleash a blitz of pin-up photographs to the media in order to add tang to her image. "I had to tell people that I am good looking," she says.

DIRTY DANCING

Slinky moves and candid cameras

A great deal of the new sexuality is being expressed through lewdly choreographed dance numbers. Influenced by the heavy rock videos of the West, Indian dance directors are matching suggestive lyrics with simulated sexual movements. In a way, it all started with Madhuri Dixit's iconic *Ek Do Teen* number in *Tezaab* in which dance director Saroj Khan served the oomph upfront and the inhibition off camera. It hit the jackpot. Other heroines soon fell in line. Even stalwarts like Amitabh Bachchan who never strutted bare-chested on screen, have had to do the bump-and-grind routine, as in *Hum*.

In the film *Trinetra*, which Chinni Prakash choreographed, nothing seems to come between a tipsy Shilpa and the camera as she writhes on the floor—surrounded by a crowd of men with lust-filled eyes and tongues hanging out. Or, when she emerges wet and sensual from a well in a garden and drapes herself seductively over Mithun Chakraborty. Mithun, as he says himself, "was the first to bring in the pelvic movements". "But, it's become much more explicit now."

Today the camera has become a voyeur, according to director Aruna Raje. "It charges towards the heroine, sticks to the swaying hips and bouncing bosoms in slow motion. The woman's bosoms heave and heave until she comes to the camera." In the rape scenes it travels much further than it should.

And some of the directors are getting sneaky. Radhu Karmakar who was the cameraman for all of Raj Kapoor's films from *Awara* to *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, says that many of the directors today place the camera at floor level and ask the heroine to twirl above it. Not that Raj Kapoor, who almost has a patent on the wet look, wasn't showing cleavage and a lot more. But he always had, according to Karmakar and other film makers, taste, a context and a bit of dignity.

Shilpa Shirodkar recounts an incident when the cameraman she had befriended warned her about a particular shot. "He told me to be careful because the camera was at a strange angle." So, the actress swirled round dancing dirty. So much so that vintage villain Prem Chopra says: "It actually looks as if they are doing *it*." Says Saroj Khan of the camera placement: "Just two inches can make the difference between what's presentable and obscene. I focus the camera from the side."

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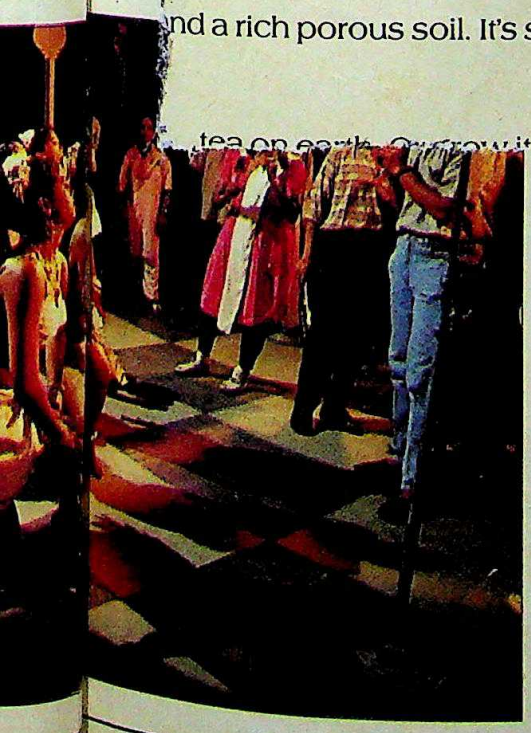

SOUTHERN SLEAZE

Dubbing is quicker and cheaper

MUCH of the hot winds wafting through Bombay studio floors are blowing from the south. A majority of the new dance masters now bringing in the bolder movements are from the south. Chinni Prakash is the top stylist but there are others in the wings: B.H. Tharun, Sri Prakash, Raghu Master, Rekha. And if the dancers are from the south, they don't even have to learn the

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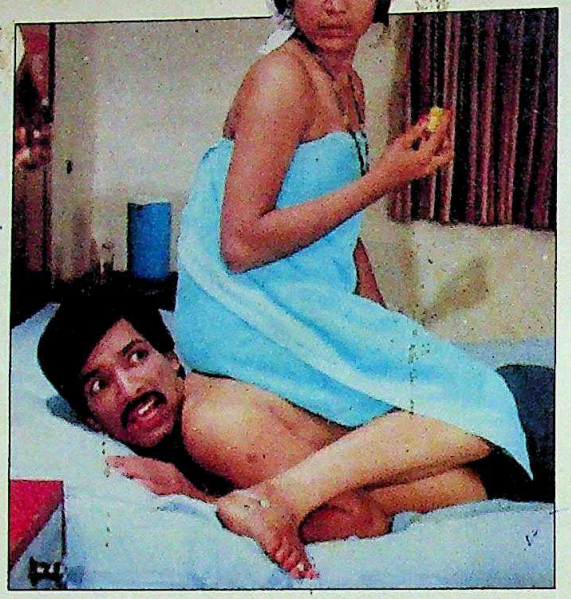
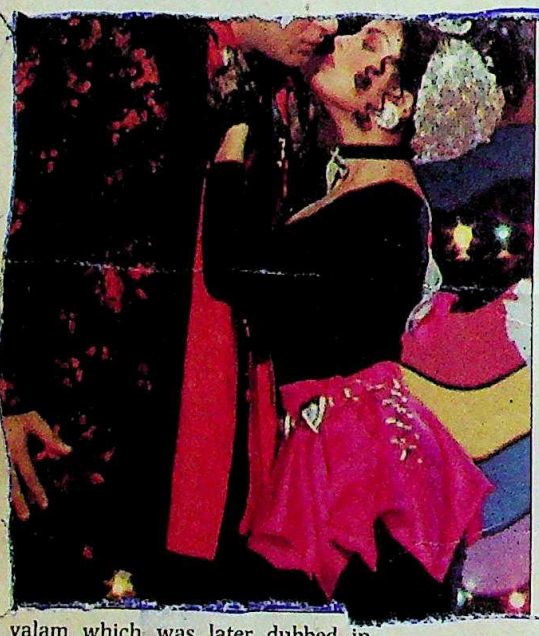
steps: the swivel-and-shove comes naturally to them. The quiet southern invasion is changing the complexion of Hindi films. "All this is happening with films being dubbed from the south," says Prakash Mehra.

Tamil films took the lead in double-talk. Hindi cinema has yet to reach that level but is now catching up, helped by the Dada Kondkes and Kadar Khans. The titles of the made-in-Madras films say it all: *Namkeen Honeymoon, Garam Jawani, Meri Pyas Bhujao.* Kerala is often the fountainhead. Shakti Samanta, chairman of the Censor Board, says that he has even seen a film on lesbianism in Malayalam which was later dubbed in Madras. Often films which have been passed by the censors in Kerala are dubbed into Hindi. Sometimes, it is even more surreptitious. The portions snipped off by the censors—called "bits"—are then quietly added to other films. Never mind the relevance. Or the continuity.





These films are, according to Shashilal Nair, made on a 21-day shoestring budget in Kerala. The uncensored portions are then supplied along with the print. "These are dubbed into Hindi and then interpolated into Hindi movies...the exhibitor and distributor take the print with the clippings and insert them wherever they find a link." A Hindi film actress can suddenly find herself in the most awkward of situations. The "interpolated" films are usually found in the smaller towns or travelling cinemas. Or morning shows too early for the police. The trend started about six years ago, says Randhir Kapoor.

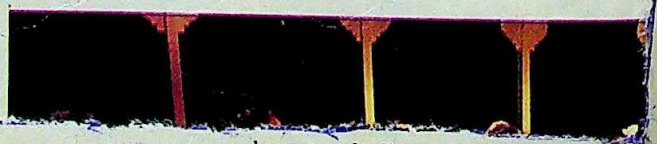
Even without the southern influence, there's no denying the fact that romance has gone physical. "There is an acceptance of sexuality in romance today...it's gone heavy," says Shekhar Kapur. Just how heavy, can be gauged by looking at what film makers are making rain do—though it always used to

Stills from *Namkeen Honeymoon* (left); and *Layanam*: the south leads the way

drawing-rooms, now they have entered our bedrooms," says Randhir Kapoor. Hence: be wet and tell, especially in the days of beady-eyed censors. In *Shri 420*, there was the umbrella. Several decades later in *Namak Halal*, off goes the umbrella—Smita dances out into the rain—writhing to the *Aaj rapat jayen tho humhe na uthaiyo*. Today, Amrish Puri in the forthcoming *Garajana* presses a button and up gushes a waterfall, drenching the poor heroine. And Shilpa rises from the well with that famous *jhatka*. As Prahlad Kakkar, ace adman, says: "1991 is one from the groin."

"Once, actresses like Madhubala and Nargis used their eyes to emote. Now we use our limbs. As a sort of body language."

MADHURI DIXIT



"All this sexuality in movies is happening with the films being dubbed from the south."

PRAKASH MEHRA

How long it will last is anybody's guess. Trends in modern Indian cinema tend to change faster than star costumes. But for now, the necklines are plunging while the temperatures are rising. As are the hemlines. ■

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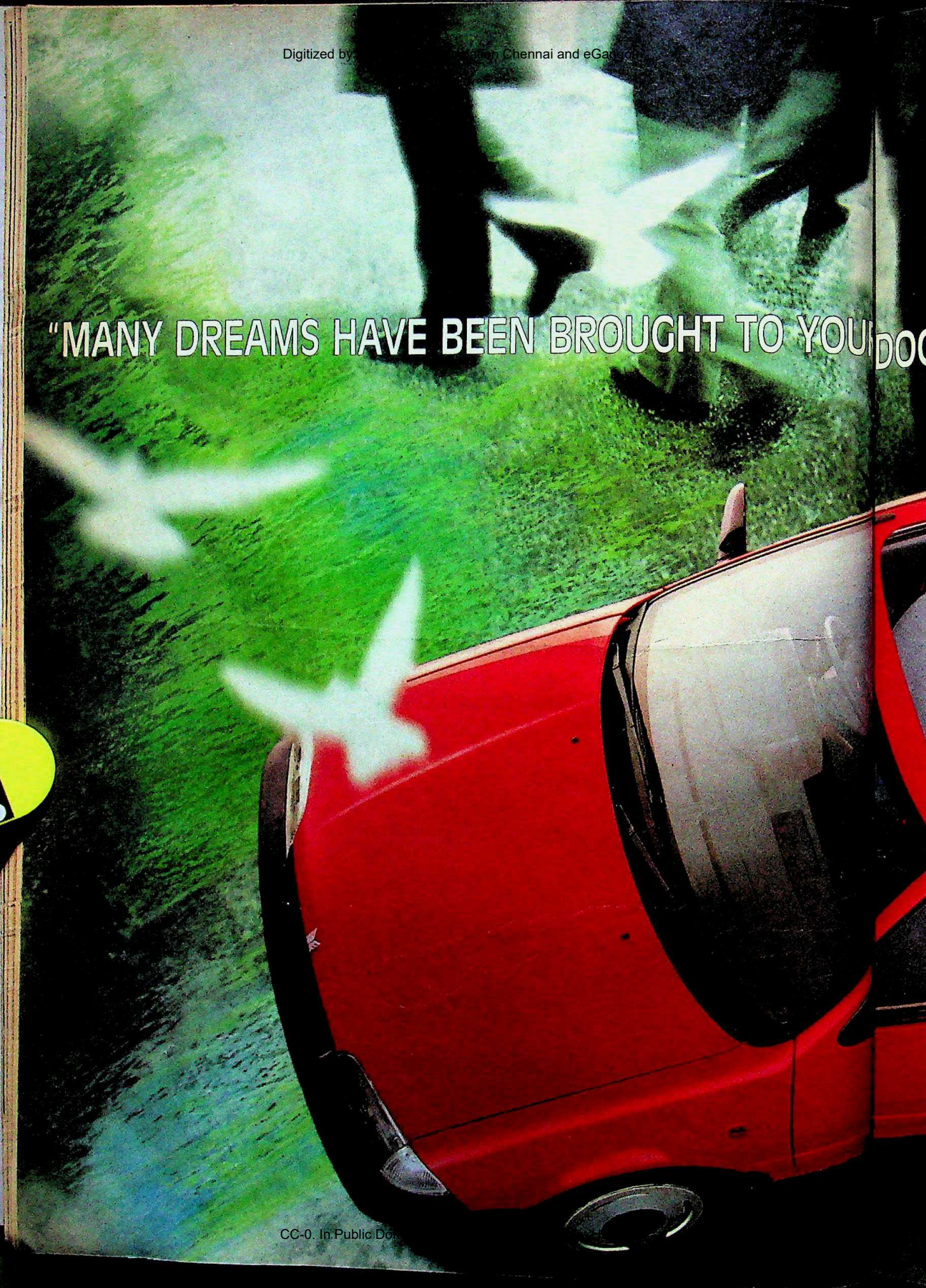

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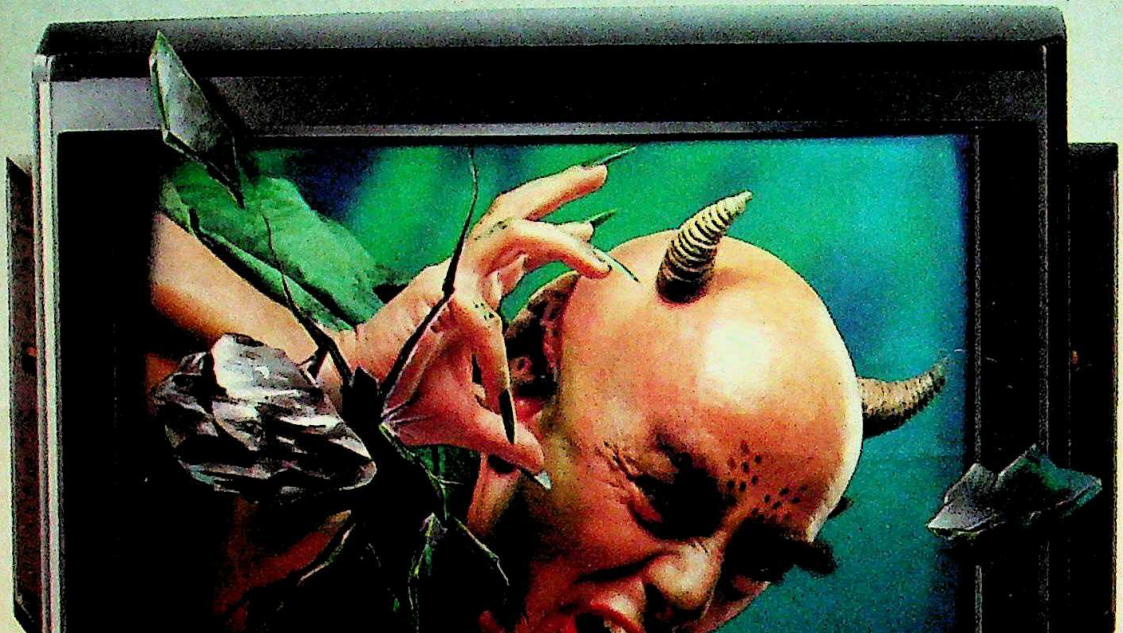

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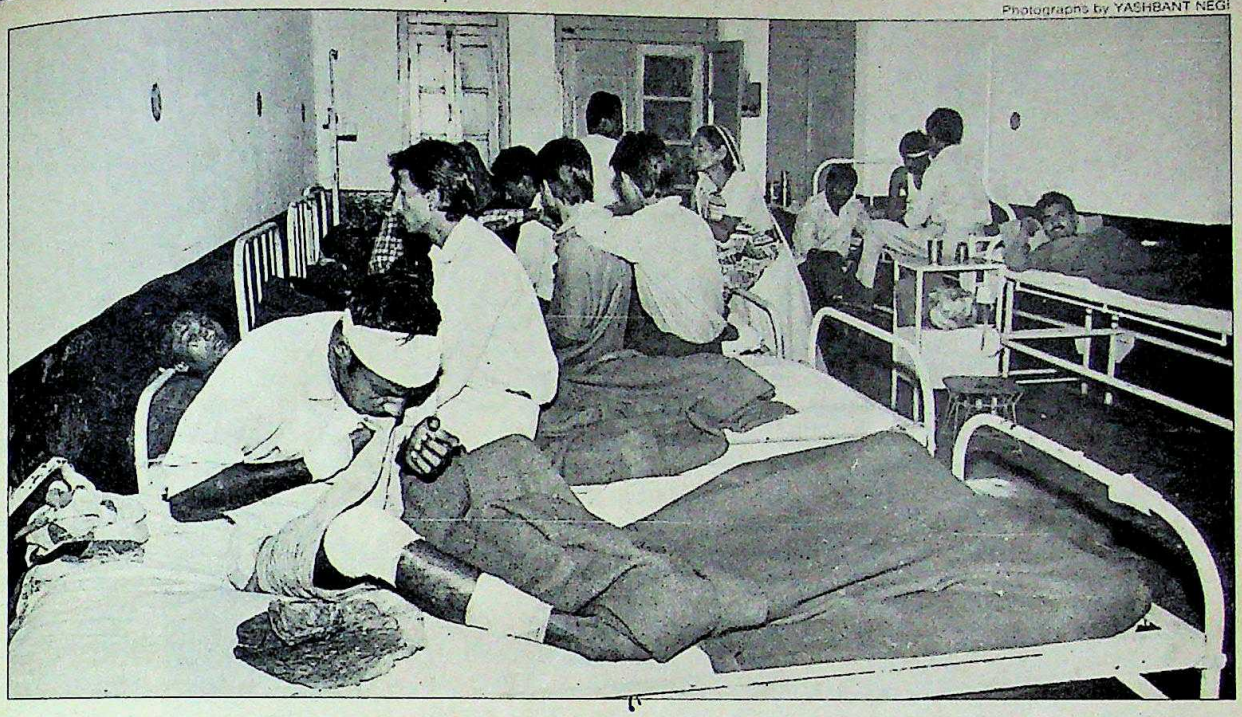
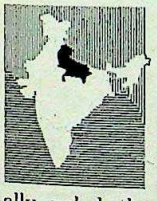


UTTAR PRADESH

Fatal Festivities

Terrorists strike during Ram Lila celebrations



IT was meant to be the symbolic moment when good triumphs over evil. But for the people of Rudrapur in the Terai region, it was evil that eventually ruled the day. The Ram Lila ground, decked up for Dussehra festivities, became a killing ground. In just 15 minutes the festive arena exploded into a macabre terrorist target. And when the smoke cleared, there were over 40 corpses, scores of torn limbs and screaming children.

Though the police weren't entirely unprepared for the October 17 explosions, the blasts still took them by surprise. In the past few months there had been one blast in a Rudrapur market, and a bomb in a state roadways bus was defused in the nick of time. Last month, the Terai-based Bhindranwale Saffron Tigers of Khalistan (BSTK) pasted posters in Rudrapur threatening people with large-scale killings. The Intelligence Bureau too warned of terrorist attacks.

The police went on a massive hunt, looking for potential death dealers. On October 17, four companies of the BSF aided by the police made an intensive search in the town. Ram Lila sites were put under special scrutiny. In fact, just hours before the blasts a police party had inspected a Ram Lila ground close to the one which got blown up.

The tragedy struck when Lord Ram was laying the bridge to Lanka. The nails, nuts and bolts packed with the explosive flew like bullets in all directions. The hundreds of onlookers did not stand a chance.

The police bundled the injured and the dead into vehicles and drove them to the Nehru Hospital nearby. The militants had counted on this. For 15 minutes later, another explosion followed. A bicycle leaning against the hospital wall was the instrument of death this time. Four women carrying an injured person died on the spot. And a 10-year-old boy, who had merely been grazed in the first incident, was mangled to death.

Two groups have so far claimed responsibility: the BSTK and the Khalistan National Army. But Singh says: "We believe it's the BSTK. They alone use explosives."

Even though the police have picked up a woman in whose house the plot was supposedly hatched, officials are not calling it a breakthrough. "I doubt the conspirators met in Rudrapur," notes an official. The police are certain the killers are hovering in the surrounding jungles and cane-fields.

Injured victims (top); and bomb splinters (above): striking terror

Typically, local politicians are crying themselves hoarse. The Congress(I) is demanding the dismissal of the state Government while the BJP is putting the blame for the blasts on the furore created by Congressmen over the Pilibhit killings.

In all this, the real tragedy has almost been forgotten amidst the heap of mangled bodies, injured people, and orphaned children who line the corridors of Nehru Hospital.

—RAHUL PATHAK in Rudrapur

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Power Play

Top Naxals woo dalits

NAXALITES are as fissile as volatile. After splintering into numerous factions over the years, the militant movement fragmented yet again last fortnight. In a significant development in Andhra Pradesh, top-ranking Naxalite leader, K.G. Satyamurthy, surfaced after years of oblivion to create the Samatha Volunteer Force (SVF), drawing cadres from his parent body, the People's War Group (PWG).

Satyamurthy's objectives were clear: to cull an exclusive following among the dalits, and to force a split in the PWG led by rival Kondapalli Seetharamaiah, 78. On the eve of a dalit rally in Vijayawada, Satyamurthy, 62, declared: "The SVF will be a youth army to counter attacks made on dalits."

battle ahead. The irony is that Seetharamaiah was drafted as secretary of the Naxalites' state committee by Satyamurthy before the two fell out in 1986.

Seetharamaiah is under pressure from other quarters as well. There is growing dissension within the PWG. And an intense power struggle is brewing between central organising committee member Muppala Lakshman Rao and state committee Secretary Nalla Adi Reddy to succeed Seetharamaiah. Younger militants too want the ailing leader to be replaced.

While the Naxalite leaders slug it out, PWG cadres are going on the rampage. In recent weeks, M. Ramanaiah, a Warangal farmer, was hacked to death for buying land without their permission while the home of a Mandal Praja Parishad president was blown up for his press statement against the PWG. And in Nizamabad district, PWG men gunned down the Jukkal Mandal Praja Parishad president, to protest the Government's refusal to grant permission for a rally.

The Government, meanwhile, is determined not to slacken its hold.

A. PRABHAKAR RAO

Destroyed house: terror tactics

But the PWG is not backing off from what it considers as its turf. To demonstrate its concern for the dalit cause and check defections, PWG men raided Ramapuram village in Guntur district, killing two farmers, Atchi Reddy and Anki Reddy, for not allowing Harijans to draw water from a well.

The state Government is watching these developments with concern. Caste divisions may prove the last straw on its already burdened back. The fact that Satyamurthy is a Scheduled Caste while Seetharamaiah is a Reddy, is an ominous sign of the caste

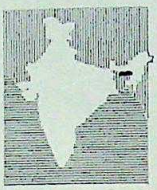
Fumes state Home Minister Dr M.V. Mysoora Reddy: "Naxalites are trying to use the people to grab power. We will not tolerate it." The Government has already taken up direct sale of arrack in the face of PWG threats to contractors.

While resorting to strong-arm tactics, Chief Minister N. Janardhana Reddy also has a realistic approach. Says he: "Naxalism is a sensitive issue. Solutions have to be found within that framework." Something easier said than done. —AMARNATH K. MENON

MEGHALAYA

Speaker Slips

Biased rulings spark trouble



FACTIONAL feuds are not new to the tiny state of Meghalaya. The arbitration authority is. Last fortnight, the stand-off between the ruling Meghalaya United Parliamentary Party (MUPP) and the Congress(I)-led United Meghalaya Parliamentary

Lyngdoh (left), Kyndiah: power tussles

Front (UMPF) ended with the imposition of President's rule.

But it was only the beginning of another tussle. The trouble began in August when the UMPF announced it already enjoyed the support of half the 60-member House and more MLAs would jump ship soon. Realising that Speaker P.R. Kyndiah had an eye on his chair, Chief Minister B.B. Lyngdoh decided to cut short the toppling bid by asking Governor Madhukar Dighe to summon a special day-long session of the Assembly for a trial of strength.

The session, held on August 7, was stormy, but inconclusive. An informal head count showed 30 MLAs on Lyngdoh's side with 27 against, in a House where two seats were vacant. It was then that Kyndiah pulled off a surprise: he suspended the voting rights of five MLAs in Lyngdoh's camp, four of them MUPP ministers—Monendro Agitok, Miriam Shira, Simon Siangshai and Donkuper Roy—on the basis of a complaint filed by UMPF Secretary S.H. Shylla. It was designed to test the tolerance of the MUPP members. They went into paroxysms of rage and even a normally-composed Lyngdoh was seen hurling glasses and abuses in the House. Kyndiah caved in to the pressure but only seemingly. Within 10 days, he issued an order

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disqualifying the five members, thus setting the stage for Lyngdoh to turn to the Supreme Court.

In September, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court stayed the Speaker's orders in the cases of all but Chamberlain Marak, who is not a minister. But by refusing to submit to the Supreme Court ruling, Kyndiah fuelled a prolonged legal wrangle. Meanwhile, Lyngdoh played for time. He tried to start talks with the Congress(I) and mobilised the national opposition to persuade the prime minister to rein in his partymen in the state.

As a result, Kyndiah, who had outmanoeuvred arch-rival D.D. Lapang to be elected CLP(I) leader in July, had to make way for John Dang Phormen. But Phormen too was keen to oust Lyngdoh. So when the Assembly met for a trial of strength on October 8, Kyndiah did not allow the four 'disqualified' ministers to vote. The MUPP, reduced to a strength of 26, was tied with the UMPF. Kyndiah cast his decisive vote, announced MUPP's defeat, and then adjourned the House. But MUPP members were in no mood to swallow his ruling. They continued the proceedings, elected Robert Kharshing chairman and moved a resolution for Kyndiah's removal.

And when on Dighe's recommendations, the state Assembly was placed under suspended animation on October 11, he earned the wrath of the chief minister as well as the Congress(I). Said Lyngdoh: "My legal and constitutional government should have been allowed to stay. The way it was brought down is one of the major indications of deterioration in the country's political standards." Phormen was no happier: "I cannot understand why we were denied the right to form the Government." The Supreme Court has since refused to issue a notice to the Union Government and the Speaker, among others, on an application seeking the quashing of the notification imposing President's rule in the state.

The ramifications of the issue are wide. Says Lyngdoh: "We are losing our ability to work out compromises." Unfortunately, such compromises have inevitably led to a subversion of democracy. As was seen in the role of the Speaker whose informal power-sharing arrangement with Lyngdoh fell through and precipitated the crisis. Most of all, it is a sad comment on the complete undermining of political and judicial authority.

—SARBARI MAJUMDAR

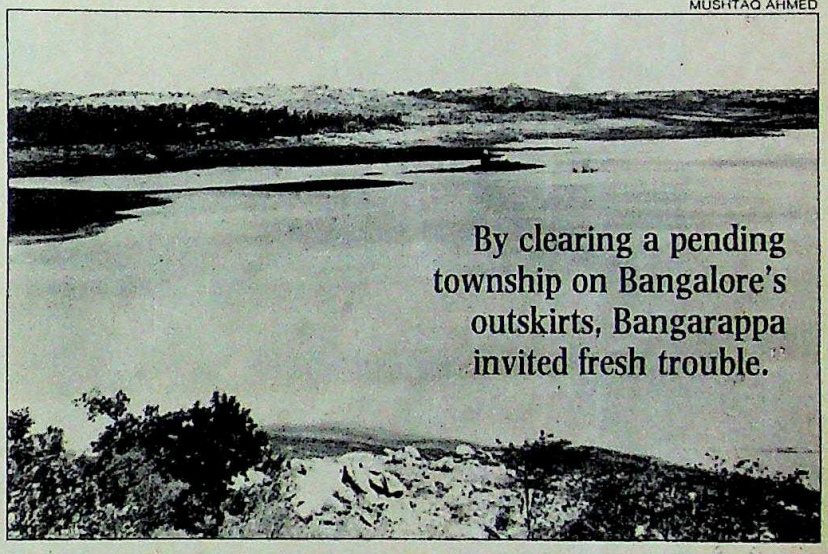
KARNATAKA

Blundering On

Bangarappa goofs again

BARELY had Karnataka Chief Minister S. Bangarappa got back on to his feet after the excise and granite controversies when another skeleton came tumbling out of his packed closet. His blunder this time was giving his assent to DLF Universal to set up a township of 270 country villas on the outskirts of Bangalore.

MUSHTAQ AHMED



By clearing a pending township on Bangalore's outskirts, Bangarappa invited fresh trouble.

Bangarappa should have anticipated the outcry. For, the proposal has already touched a number of raw nerves in the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board. This is because the township is to be located close to the Thippegondanahalli reservoir, the main source of drinking water to the city. The board contends this will lead to pollution and deplete water supply.

The reservoir (above); and Basavalingappa

The land scam dates back to 1979 when the Government permitted agricultural land near the reservoir to be used for setting up the township. The board protested, moving first the Karnataka Appellate Tribunal, then the high court. The appeal went in its favour. But DLF, which had acquired 414 acres, appealed to the division bench. Again the court ruled in the board's favour, but left a loophole stating: "Our judgement will not come in the way of the Government independently considering the matter." DLF promptly moved the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the Government consulted the Revenue Department, the Town Planning Department and the Pollution Control Board. In May, the Pollution Board approved the plan with a few conditions: the septic tank and soak pit of each farmhouse was to be located away from the reservoir and sludge in the septic tank removed once in two years. On June 29, Bangarappa passed an order allowing continuance of the earlier permission to DLF.

It was the chance Congress(I) rebels were waiting for. Early this month they sent a memorandum to the prime minister, saying: "The Government order is against the interests of the millions of people in the city." Says rebel sympathiser, B. Basavalingappa: "We won't permit elite sewage to seep into a reservoir which provides drinking water to Bangalore."

Opposition parties derived maximum mileage. BJP city corporators threatened a stir. And all the chief minister could do was come up with a tame defence: "I cannot comment until I study the files."

The high command is just as reluctant to comment. But the rebels are keeping up the pressure. And giving New Delhi only until the November by-election to take a final stand against Bangarappa.

—SARITHA RAI

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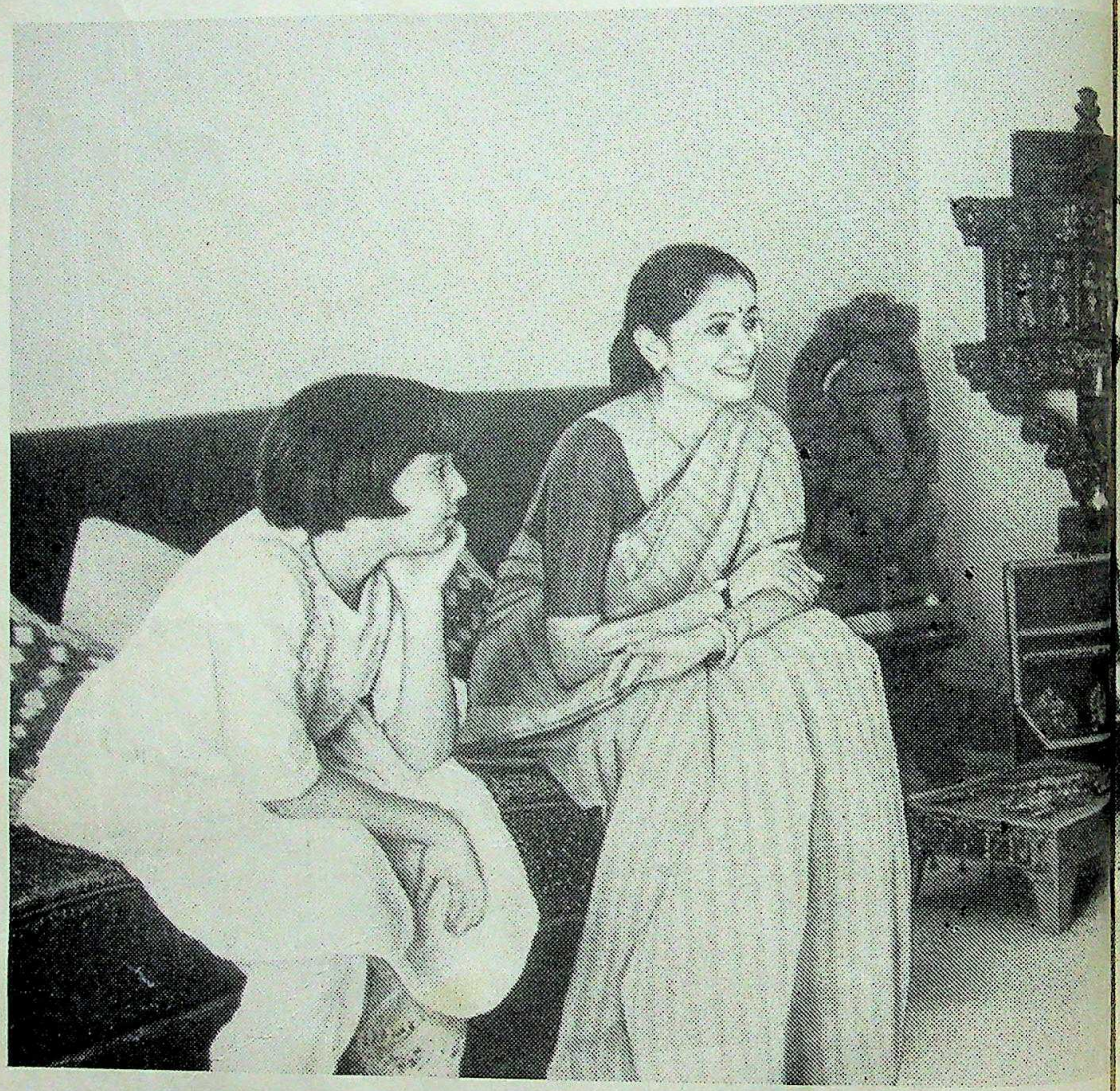

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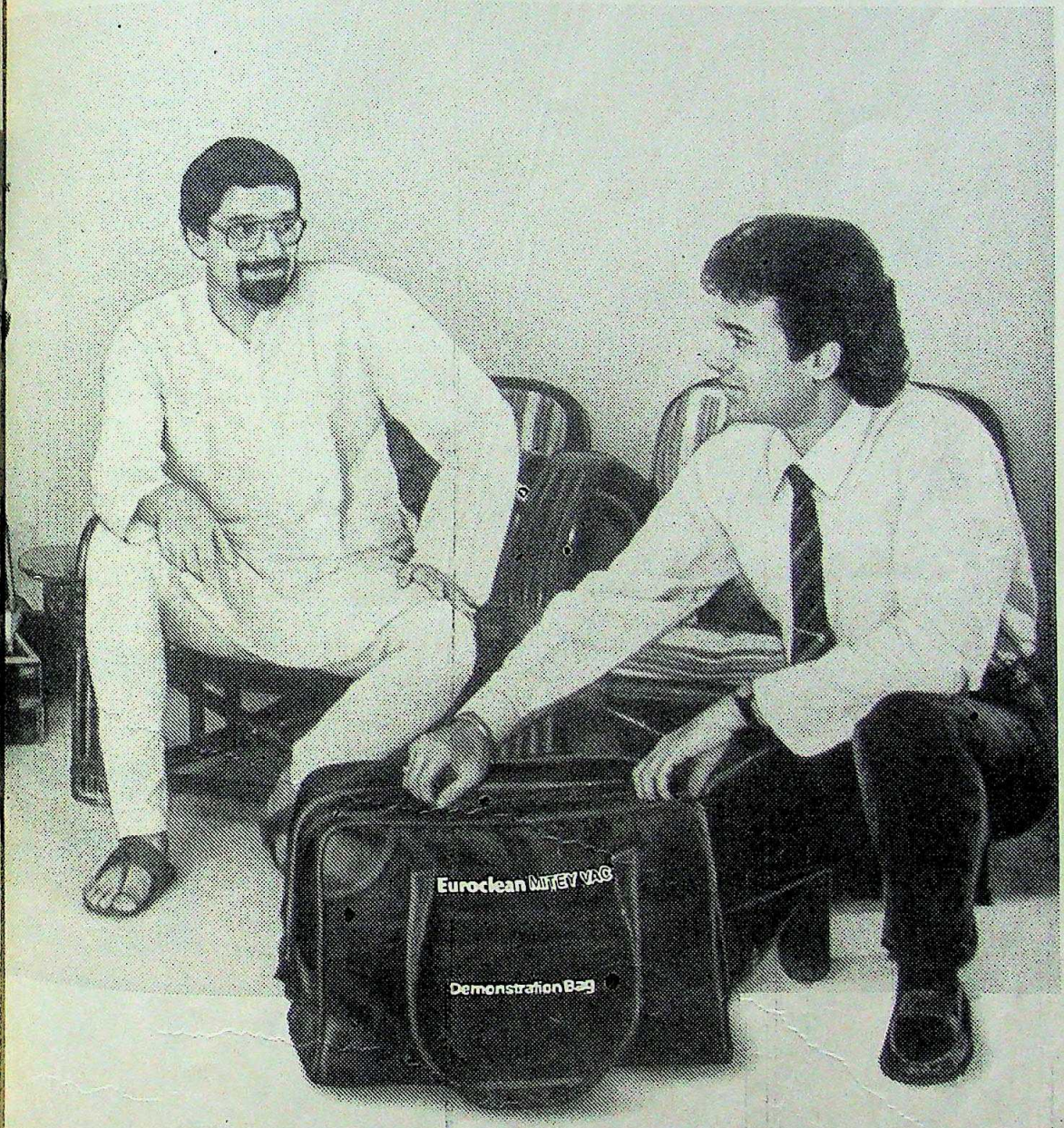

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PRASHANT PANJIAR

Sharma: big beneficiary

MADHYA PRADESH

Land Loot

Thousands of acres usurped

IN the tribal district of Bastar, surplus land has not gone to the adivasis for their uplift. Instead, over the past decade, the rich and the influential have cornered more than 10,000 acres of land—for free—by claiming to be landless agricultural workers. The fraud is compounded because the allotment of land with standing trees is prohibited.

As the ongoing inquiry fills in the contours of the multi-crore scam, the district administration has swung into action. The Revenue Department has been going through the land transfer records with a fine-tooth comb. Till last fortnight, about one-third of the 1,342 illegal allotments were cancelled and 1,357 acres re-acquired. And criminal cases registered against some of the beneficiaries and officials involved.

The usurpers include contractors, politicians, traders and government employees. Many of them live in far-away districts of Raipur and Durg. As land prices in Bastar are not very high, they were clearly after the trees. A fully grown teak tree fetches up to Rs 30,000. So, the trees alone in the grabbed land are worth Rs 50 crore.

The first to smell a rat was a voluntary organisation, Parivartan. Last year, its members discovered that in the Markatola village of Kanker tehsil, land allotted to "landless persons" had found its way to a local mining company, Bauxite India Ltd, which had detected mineral traces in the area. Protests from Parivartan led to an official inquiry, which revealed that of the 53 persons allotted 142 acres of land in the village, 28 were outsiders, mostly traders and officials and their relations. For example, Prabal Kumar Peter, the now suspended patwari, had allotted two five-acre plots to himself and one to his wife.

After the Markatola episode, the then commissioner Sudeep Banerjee ordered a district-wide probe. And found the loot had continued with the connivance of land officials. They wantonly misused a section of the Land Revenue Act which provides for allotment of land to the poor.

A telling case is of Madanlal Sharma, a BJP leader, who runs a transport business and owns a sawmill in Sukuma town of Bastar district. He got 25 acres of land for his four sons and one daughter. His daughter's plot alone has 130 trees standing on it, valued at Rs 20 lakh. Among other allottees are Akbar Khan and his two brothers, local Congressmen who run a video theatre and a shop in Sukuma. They got 15 acres with valuable timber trees. Ishwar Ramani, a Kanker medical practitioner, got five acres in Markatola.

The administration's action has earned it all-round applause. Even the local Naxalites have promised to co-operate in saving the tribals from alienation provided the campaign against land grabbers is followed to its logical conclusion. From all indications, the long arm of the law will reach them.

—N.K. SINGH

NIYOGI MURDER

Dire Delay

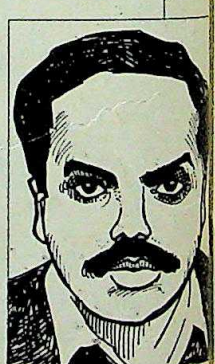
Police apathy raises doubts

THE police had an inkling about the plot to kill trade union leader Shankar Guha Niyogi in April. But by the time they chose to act on the information, he was dead.

On April 29, Niyogi had received a letter, signed by a "well-wisher", which warned against a conspiracy to kill him by Chandrakant Shah, a member of the family which runs the Rs 80-crore Simplex group. The letter was handed over to the police. A reminder followed on July 4. Niyogi had feared for his life and said as much in a video cassette now with the police. But no action was taken.

The police apathy continued even after the murder. Niyogi's wife had named nine prominent industrialists of Bhilai—the persons who spent sleepless nights because of the powerful agitation launched by Madhya Pradesh's most famous labour leader—in her FIR. But when it came to interrogation, none of them were even called upon. Instead, 300 others were rounded up and questioned in the face of public outcry.

It was only in the last fortnight, that the police finally got cracking. They identified Paltan as the killer hired to eliminate Niyogi and Shah as the mastermind. Though it may be too late, the police have launched a



Shah (right); Mishra and Rai: dubious past

DESHBANDU/Lodhi Rituraj

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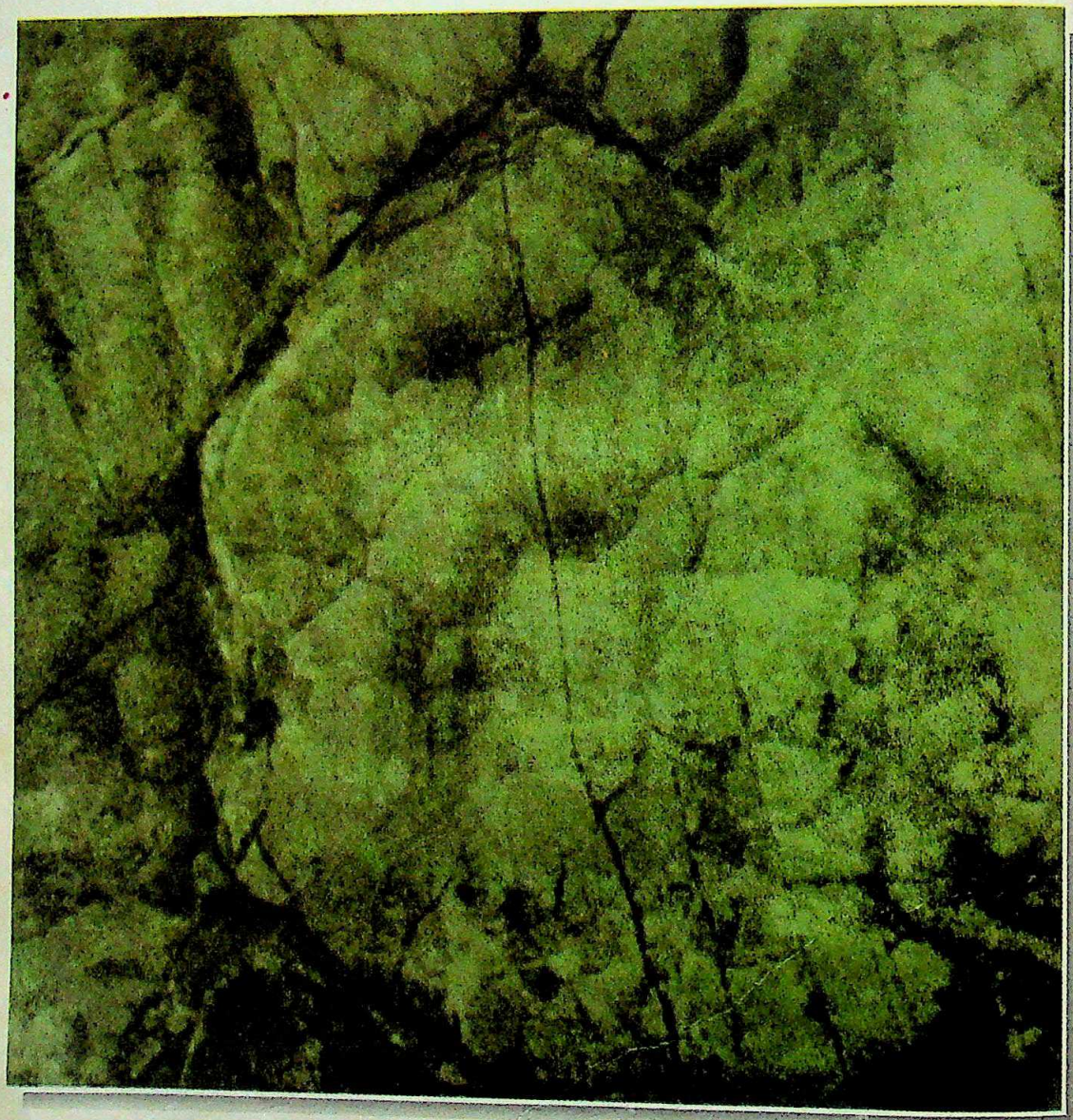

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hunt for Paltan and Shah. Shah's palatial bungalow in Bhilai is under surveillance. International airports have been alerted as the police apprehends that he might try to flee the country. A police team has been sent to Paltan's hometown Deoria, in Uttar Pradesh, while many industrialists named in the complaint filed by Niyogi's wife have already secured anticipatory bail.

Shah had a motive to eliminate the trade unionist. He is reported to be one of the industrialists most affected by Niyogi's movement. One of his plants had shut and another was incurring losses. Moreover, Shah's past is far from clean. The police suspect his involvement in four other murders.

Shah is said to have enlisted the aid of an associate Gyan Prakash Mishra. Subsequently, they recruited an employee Awadesh Rai and Abhay Singh, who works at the Bhilai Steel Plant. The two are reported to have visited Nepal about two months ago to procure firearms for the assassination.

Finally, in September, Paltan was approached for the job. Paltan agreed. But refused to use the smuggled revolver. He had more faith in country-made pistol. He just took some cartridges. For a week preceding the hit, he monitored Niyogi's movements. In the early hours on September 28, he rode a motorcycle to the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha leader's residence in Bhilai and shot the sleeping man at a point blank range through an open window of the ground floor room. With six bullets lodged at the back of his head and neck, the union leader died on his way to the hospital.

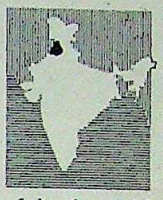
The next morning Paltan demanded his promised pound of cash. Shah and Mishra hastily cobbled together Rs 18,000 and told him to flee the town immediately and come back when things cooled down. Then Shah, after sending his wife to her parents in fear of a workers' reprisal, rushed to Jabalpur—the seat of Madhya Pradesh High Court—with Mishra. When they could not obtain anticipatory bail, Mishra returned to Bhilai, from where he was picked up, along with Rai. Singh and Shah are still absconding.

Having come so far, the police are relieved that the case has been handed over to the CBI. Says morcha chief Janaklal Thakur: "Shah and others were just commanders of the private armies run by the industrialists. Their masters must be arrested." But if Shah and Paltan are not traced soon, that will not be possible. —N.K. SINGH

PUNJAB

Hitting Home

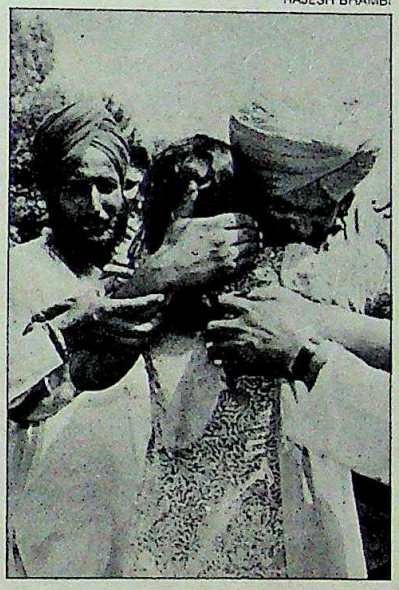
Militants target policemen



IRONICALLY, the police in Punjab need both protection and policing. Increasing attacks on policemen have gone hand in hand with subversion of the force, blunting its edge.

In a stepped-up offensive, on October 2 alone, the militants gunned down 26 relatives of policemen and in the same week killed 14 securitymen, including an SP in Ropar. Facing threats to life and property in the villages, their

RAJESH BHAMBI



Grieving family: under fire

families are fleeing to cities. In the grip of a fear psychosis, many of them insert notices in the Punjabi language press seeking forgiveness from militants and pleading that their men in uniform have done no wrong.

But what forced the Government to ask for an intelligence report on what ails the police were two recent serious incidents. A home guard colluded with militants to kill nine persons, including eight securitymen, at Gharchon in Sangrur district. And at Chela village in Amritsar, a special police officer (SPO) in fact helped in wiping out 10 members of a family.

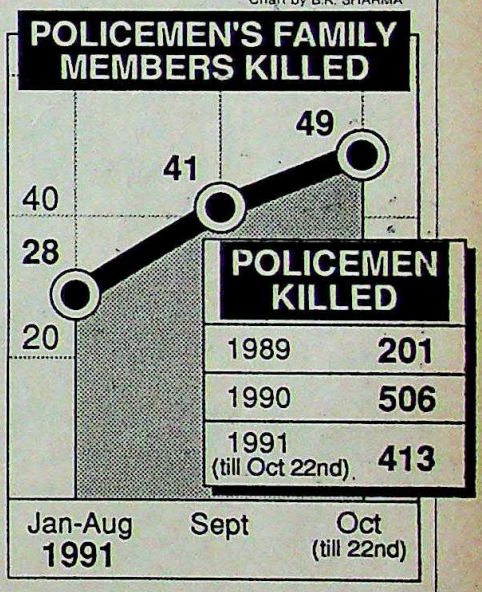
The report has revealed the sinister dimensions of the widespread infiltration. They include leakage of information about various operations, offering hideouts and safe passage to militants, desertions and inciting fellow policemen to mutiny. Militants win over policemen through money, ideological propaganda or coercion.

To tackle the malaise, the report suggests inter-range transfers and verifying antecedents of recruits. On his part, Chief Secretary Tejendra Khanna recommends better officer-jawan rapport by holding frequent debriefing sessions.

However, top police bosses blame schemes such as hiring SPOs, introduced by former DGP K.P.S. Gill, for the problems faced by the force. The induction of SPOs without a proper training and on daily wages has encouraged mercenary instincts, they believe.

Yet, the Government is recruiting 10 SPOs for every village inhabited by

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



policemen's families. Other morale-boosting moves: doubling ex gratia grants to Rs 1 lakh for every family member killed and full compensation for property lost. But the police officers want adequate group housing for the 50,000-strong force.

Many Punjab observers feel that militants are currently targeting policemen to settle scores. After the Chandigarh SSP, Sumedh Singh Saini, was attacked two months ago, female relatives of the chief suspect, Balwinder Singh Jatana, were liquidated in Ropar village. The militants believed it to be the police's handiwork.

Clearly, the police will not be able to counter the enemy without, unless it flushes out the one within. However, in the past it has always fought shy of setting its own house in order.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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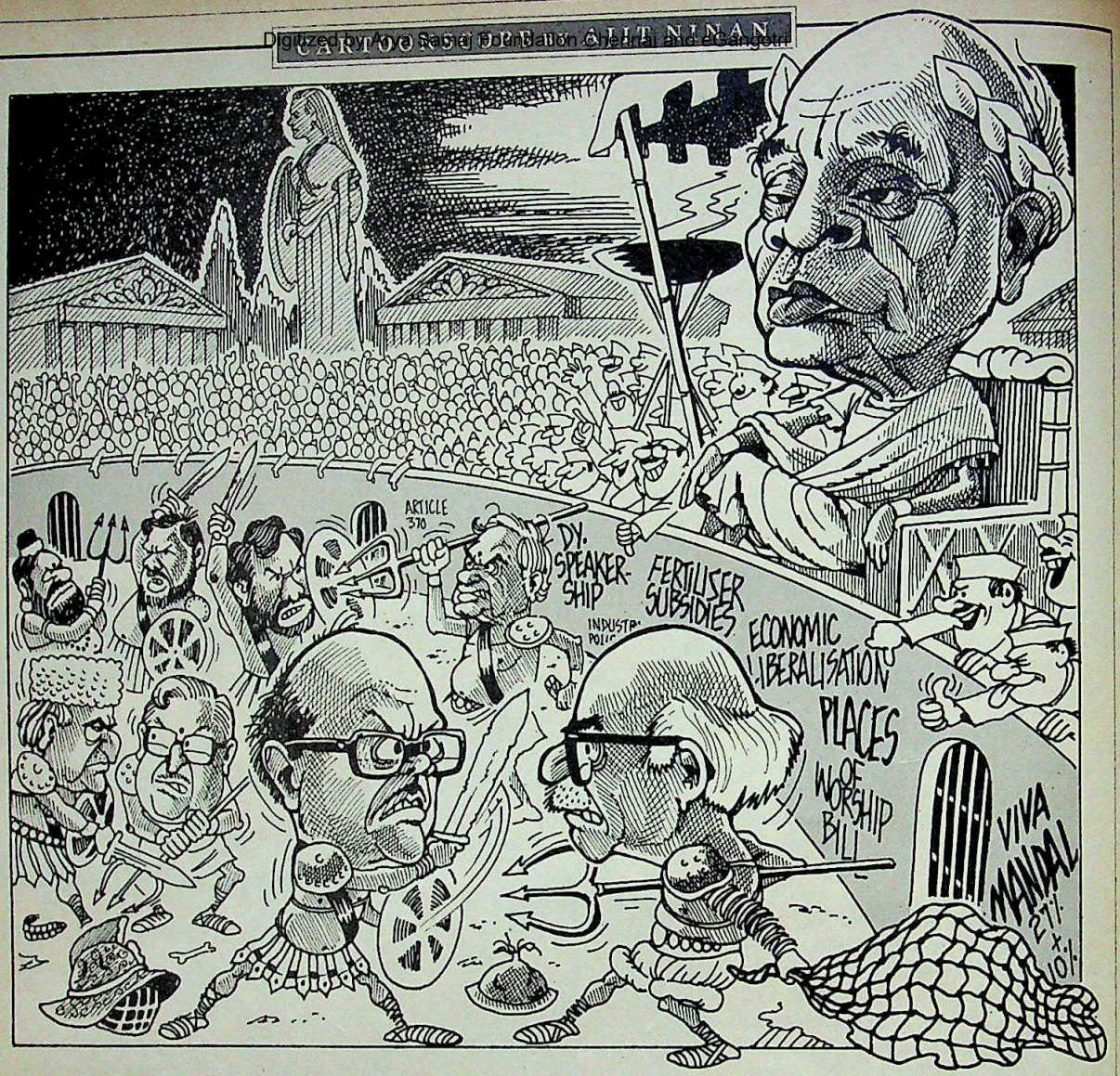

SIGN POSTS

RELEASED: the Oriya version of the Valmiki Ramayan, authored by J.B. Patnaik, in Bhubaneswar. The former Orissa chief minister has also written the Oriya version of the Mahabharat, and now plans to translate the philosophical poem Bhagwad Gita into his mother tongue.

GUTTED: Calcutta's second-oldest theatre, The Star, in a fire. The 103-year-old hall was set up by Bengali playwright, director and actor Girish Chandra Ghosh in 1888. Preliminary investigations suggest that the fire resulted from an electric short circuit in a stall put up temporarily in the theatre complex.

APPROVED: a Rs 195.61-crore project for the conservation of the Ajanta and Ellora Caves, which are recognised by UNESCO as one of the 17 heritage sites in India. The project will be jointly funded by the Maharashtra state Government, the Centre and the private sector, each of whom will contribute varying amounts.

RETIRED: from films, Rajesh Khanna, the Congress(I) candidate for the New Delhi constituency. The heart-throb of the '70s said that he had decided to quit films, regardless of the outcome of the by-election, and would now dedicate his life to *jan seva* (service of the people).

RELINQUISHED: by Sam Pitroda, charge of the Telecom Commission after two years as chairman. While H.P. Wagle replaces him, the expatriate telecom wizard takes over as advisor of technology missions to the prime minister, with a rank of minister of state.

DECORATED: Escorts Chairman H.P. Nanda, with the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur medal by France, for his contribution towards improving Indo-French economic relations and strengthening trade ties. He was presented the medal by the French ambassador at a glittering ceremony at the embassy in New Delhi.

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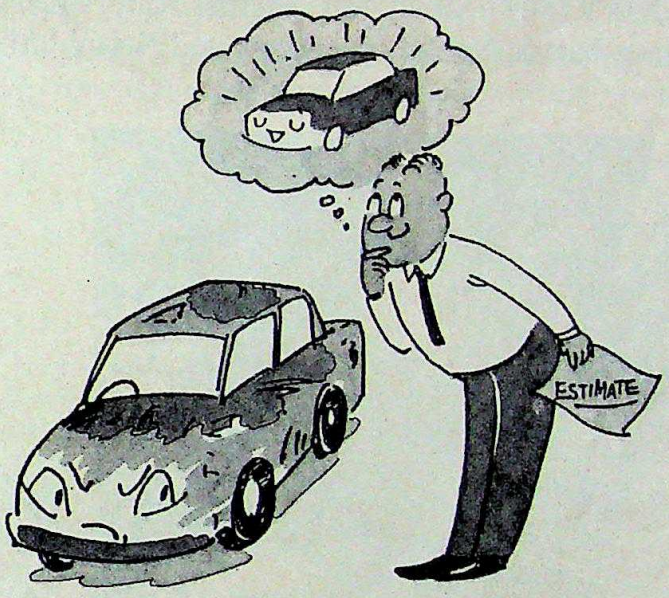

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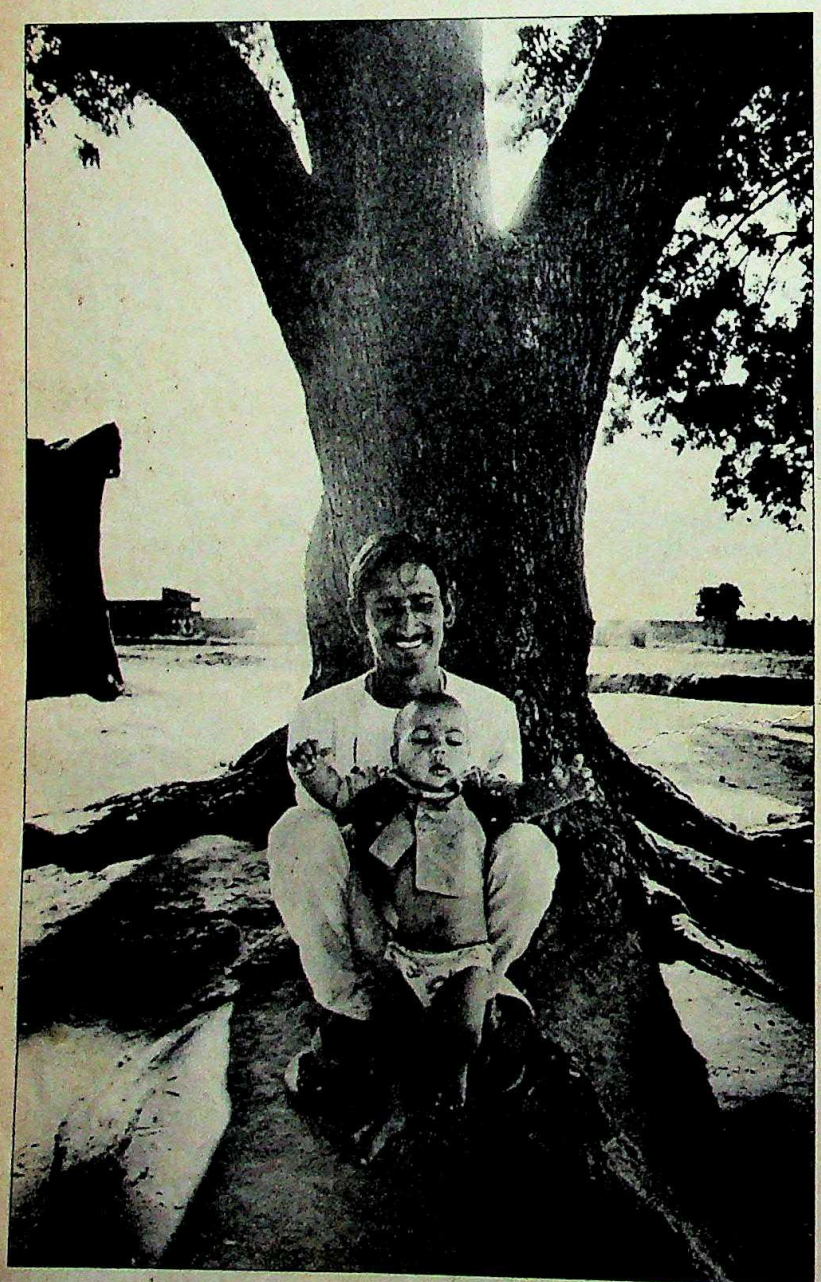
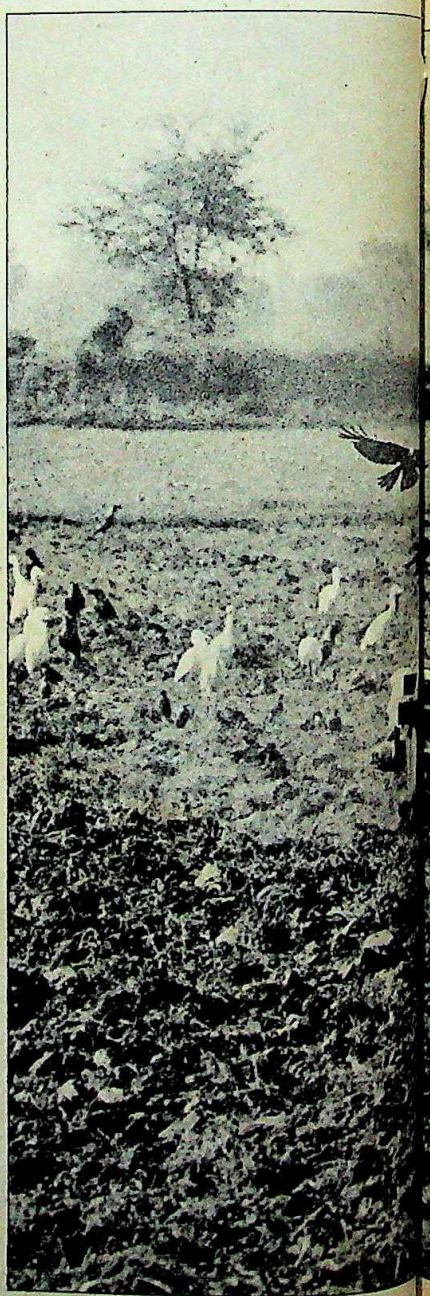
OPEN JAILS

Fettered but Free

In an unusual experiment, thousands of criminals, including murder convicts, live outside the claustrophobic confines of closed prisons in the country's 26 open jails leading a fruitful and productive life. A far cry from the Alcatraz-like image of a jail, there are no walls, no bars, no sentries in these open jails spread over vast fields and plantations. Principal Correspondent RAMESH MENON and Picture Editor BHAWAN SINGH visited the sprawling jails of Nabha, Sanganer and Nettukaltheri.





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BEFORE the rays of the rising sun swathe the treetops with gold, Jagroop Singh, 45, is bent over a paddy field at Nabha village in Punjab. And he tends the farm till dusk. As the sun sets, he settles down to cook a meal in his nearby red-brick hut. Then flops down on his *charpoy* to watch the stars. The only break in this routine is when he has a visitor.

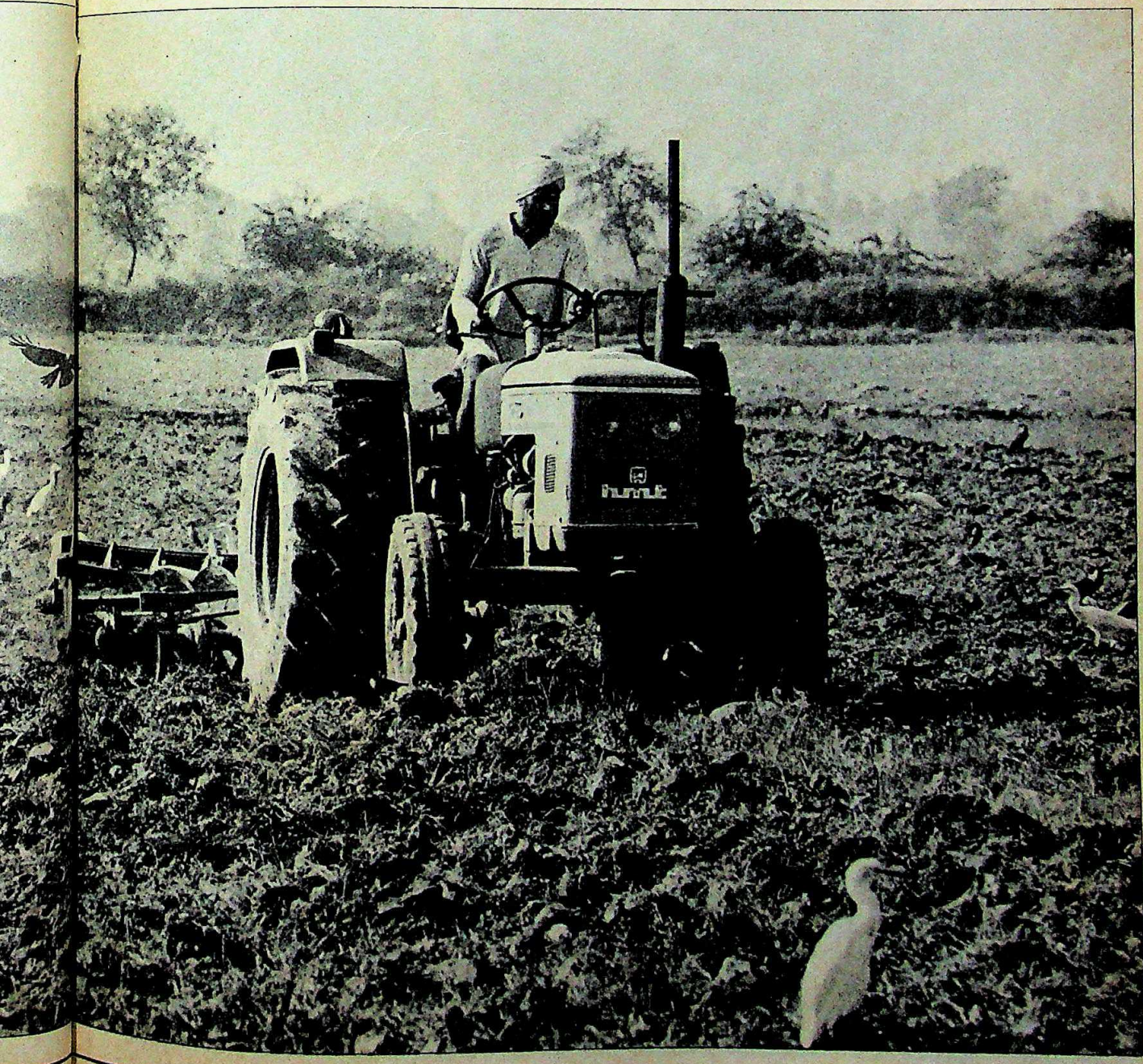
But Jagroop never steps outside the bounds of the farm to visit anyone. The reason: he is a prisoner serving a life sentence for murder. An unusual prisoner, though. There are no walls closing in on him, no bars and no sentries either. Yet, he is one of the many thousands of prisoners confined to what is called an open jail—an unusual experiment running successfully in over a dozen states since the late '50s.

Successful, due to the paradoxical combination of freedom and captivity. Spread over a sprawling 700 acres of fields, the prison where Jagroop and the many other lifers live is a far cry from the Alcatraz-like image of prison. Although the road to freedom is just a stone's throw away, no one tries to escape.

They have no reason to. For prisoners at the Nabha open jail and the country's 26 other open jails aren't treated like criminals. They have what they valued most in the outside world—respect and freedom. Says Jagroop: "The only difference is that I am working on a government farm and not my own." Khemat Singh, a 40-year-old murder convict from Patiala, echoes the same sentiments: "I don't even feel I am in prison." The former bangle-seller lives in a brick-and-mud hut, overlooking a dairy farm of over two dozen cattle.

Even as terror stalks the land, the Nabha jail is an island of

Although the road to freedom is just a stone's throw away, prisoners never consider escaping as they have here what they value most in the outside world—respect and freedom.



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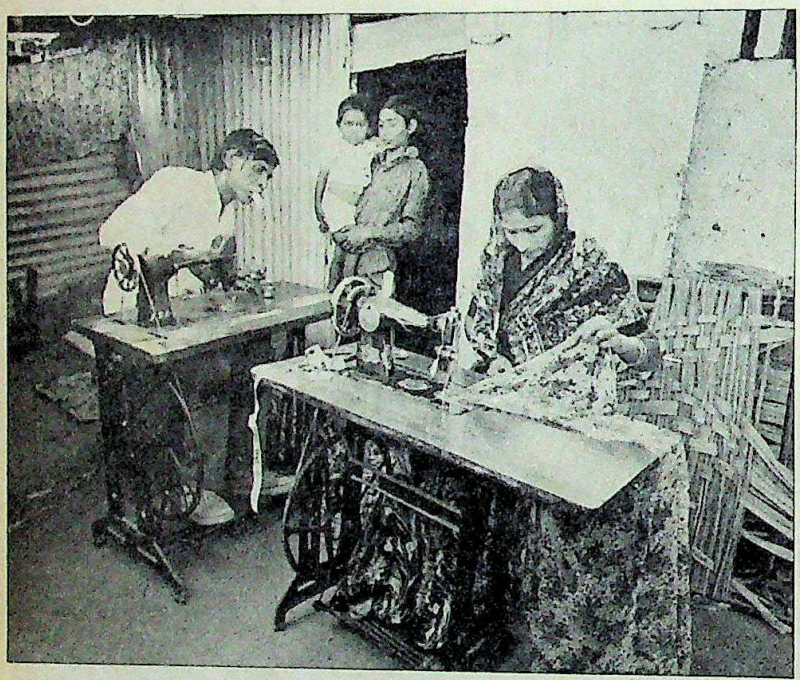
peace and prosperity. Just a barren stretch twenty years ago, the lush fields of the open jail are loaded with grain today. Many non-agriculturists like tailors Kuldeep Singh, 26, and his father Bahadur Singh, 56—imprisoned for seven years in connection with a dowry death—have now taken to farming.

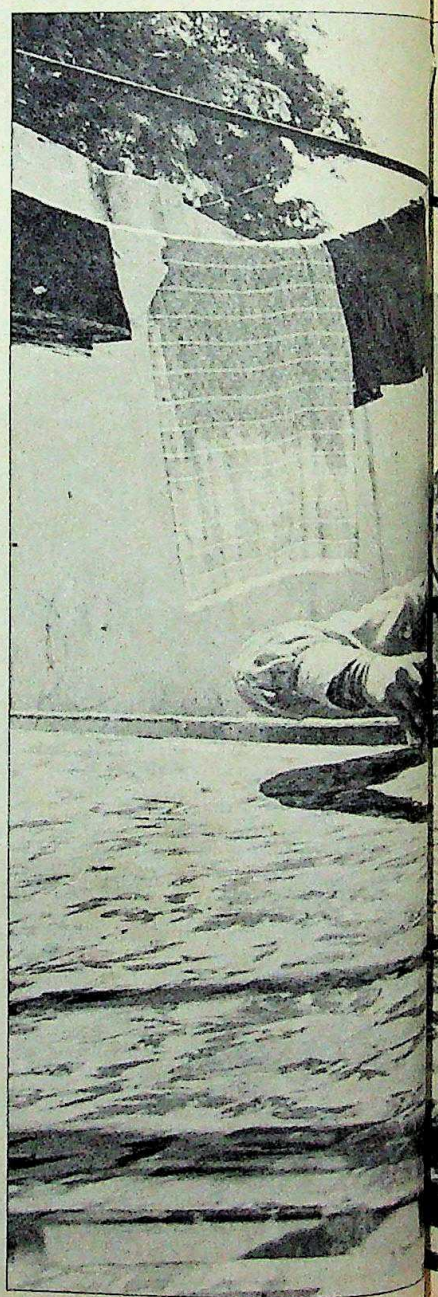
Life at the Sampooranand open jail in Sanganer is even better. The only time the 47 murder convicts realise they're in prison is when the daily attendance is taken. Otherwise they leave for work in the morning—some earn as much as Rs 5,000. And in the evening they return home—or rather to the open jail—where they live with their wives and school-going children. The tin huts they return to have a home-like atmosphere: photographs of the convicts' children vie for attention with those of gods from the Hindu pantheon.

Significantly, people still offer them jobs. Says Sitaram, a businessman in Sanganer: "They find jobs as they are so well behaved." Many of the hardened criminals are now totally reformed. Former head constable Subhash Chandra, 40, a murder convict, is now a tailor in Sanganer, no longer burdened by feelings of revenge.

NOT surprisingly, there's been just one escapee from the Sanganer jail in the past three decades. No wonder, as the inmates live a normal life outside the claustrophobic confines of a closed jail. Law graduate Sumer Singh, 33, who was convicted for murdering his wife, now works as a representative with a garments firm. He now sets out every morning on his scooter and returns late. His monthly salary: Rs 2,100. Says

Ramesh Chandra and Abdullah Khan work with their families at vocations of their choice like tailoring, tapping rubber and fabric printing.





SHANKAR

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he: "The freedom here helps us overcome our guilt."

Murder convict Ramesh Chandra and his wife Vijaylakshmi, who moved into the open jail soon after they got married, are also full of praise for the jail. Even their 14-year-old son, Anil, says he doesn't feel like he's lived a chained childhood. Then there is lifer Abdullah Khan, 50, who has been living in the open jail for the last six years. Helped by his wife and two daughters, he prints designs on fabric. The only time the reality of being a prisoner hit him was when his daughter, Nizarbi, got married—within the jail premises.

Tucked away in Kerala's Nettukaltheri hills is another open jail. Started in 1962, this wall-less prison which houses 368 lifers, extends over 286 acres of rubber plantations. It's had only two escapees so far, though there isn't even a fence to stop them. With sharp knife-like instruments which they use as rubber tappers, they're better armed than the three lathi-wielding warders watching over them. Yet they never take advantage of it. Most telling is a warder's comment: "We never have to use our lathis."

Moreover, open jails are also financially viable. Nettukaltheri, for instance, makes an annual profit of over Rs 20 lakh from the rubber sold. As a result, the idea is catching on. Most states have at least one open jail and some like Rajasthan have five. Another such jail is coming up on a 200-acre rubber estate in Kerala's Thevancode hills, and both Punjab and Rajasthan are also planning more such jails.

IN some ways, open jails almost seem Utopian. There are none of the nasty spats that mark closed prisons. Ravindran, 34, who has been at the Kerala jail for the last 20 months contrasts the experience with an earlier term in a closed prison: "The arguments here are not like the brawls of a closed jail." In fact, the prisoners live like an extended family—getting together at the barracks in the evenings to watch TV, listen to music and play board games like carrom.

So, the number of prisoners eager to get in is growing. But

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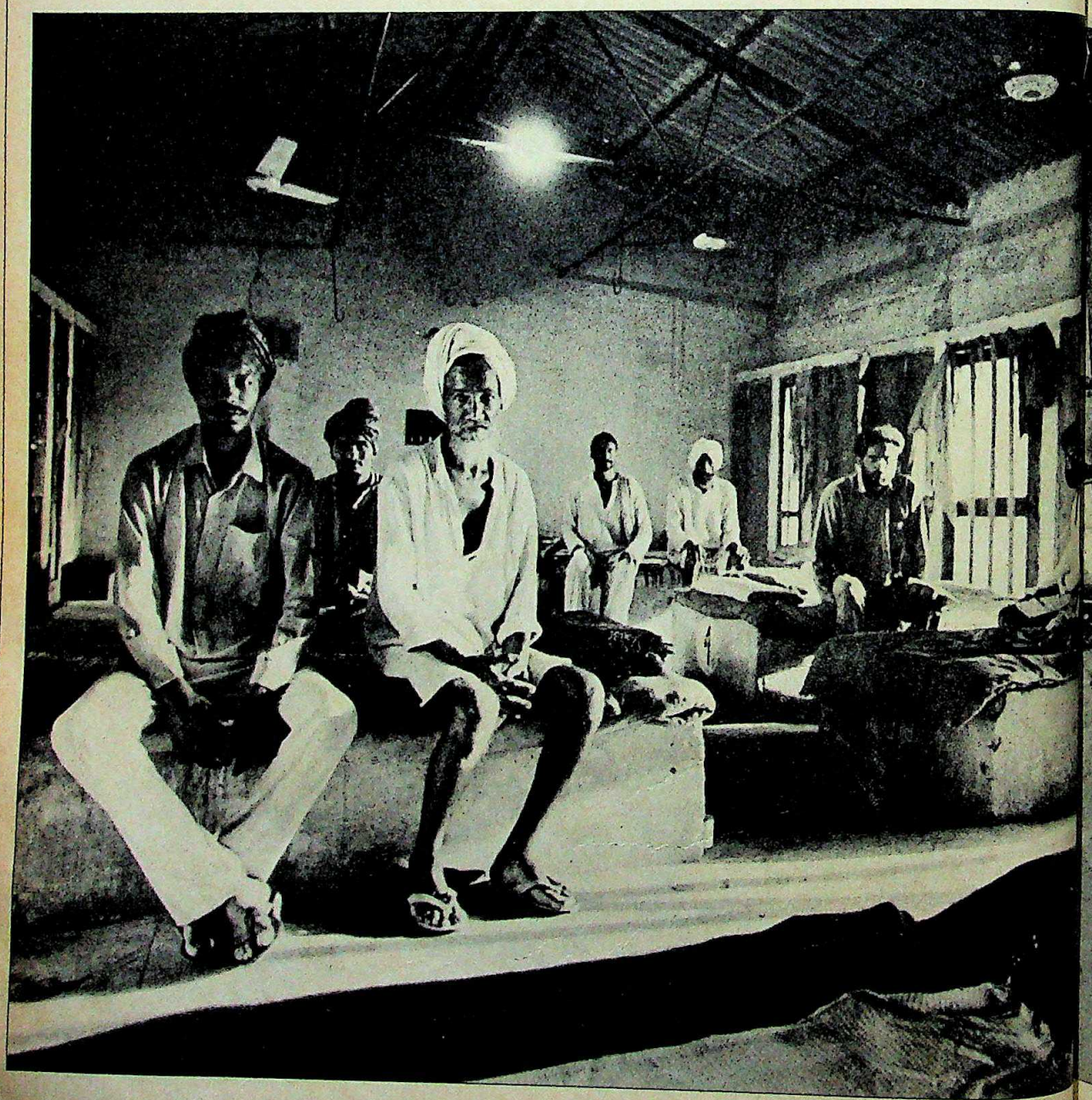
as the number of jails is limited, the jail committee only selects some well-behaved prisoners who have spent time in a closed jail. Thimma Reddy, director of the Regional Institute of Correctional Administration at Vellore, suggests more criminals should be transferred to open jails. Aside from being much more cost-efficient, this will also help reform criminals faster. Punjab jail officials are lobbying for shorter terms in open jails.

JUSTIFIABLY so. For many of the prisoners can even be trusted to work as guards. A dozen prisoners from the Nabha jail set out daily after dusk to various bore wells where they work as guards. Observes K. Selvaraj, Kerala DIG, Prisons: "There was never an unpleasant situation in the open jail." In fact, for many who move from a closed to an open jail, the experience is particularly exhilarating. Chellamani, 30, who is serving a life term for a murder, describes his five years in a closed jail in Trivandrum: "The most intimidating feeling was realising that there was a 30-ft wall around." The move to a jail without a wall was almost like a burst of freedom.

It is this freedom that is helping many prisoners turn over a new leaf. Like Sumer Singh Naruka, 28, at the Durgapura jail. Convicted for killing a history sheeter after a brawl in the 1980 Lok Sabha elections, he now teaches six students and is completing his masters in political science. He even plans to appear for the IAS soon.

The list of reformed criminals in open jails is endless. But the number of such jails remains limited. ■

While Kuldeep Singh and father Bahadur Singh live with other convicts as an extended family, others are visited occasionally by family members.



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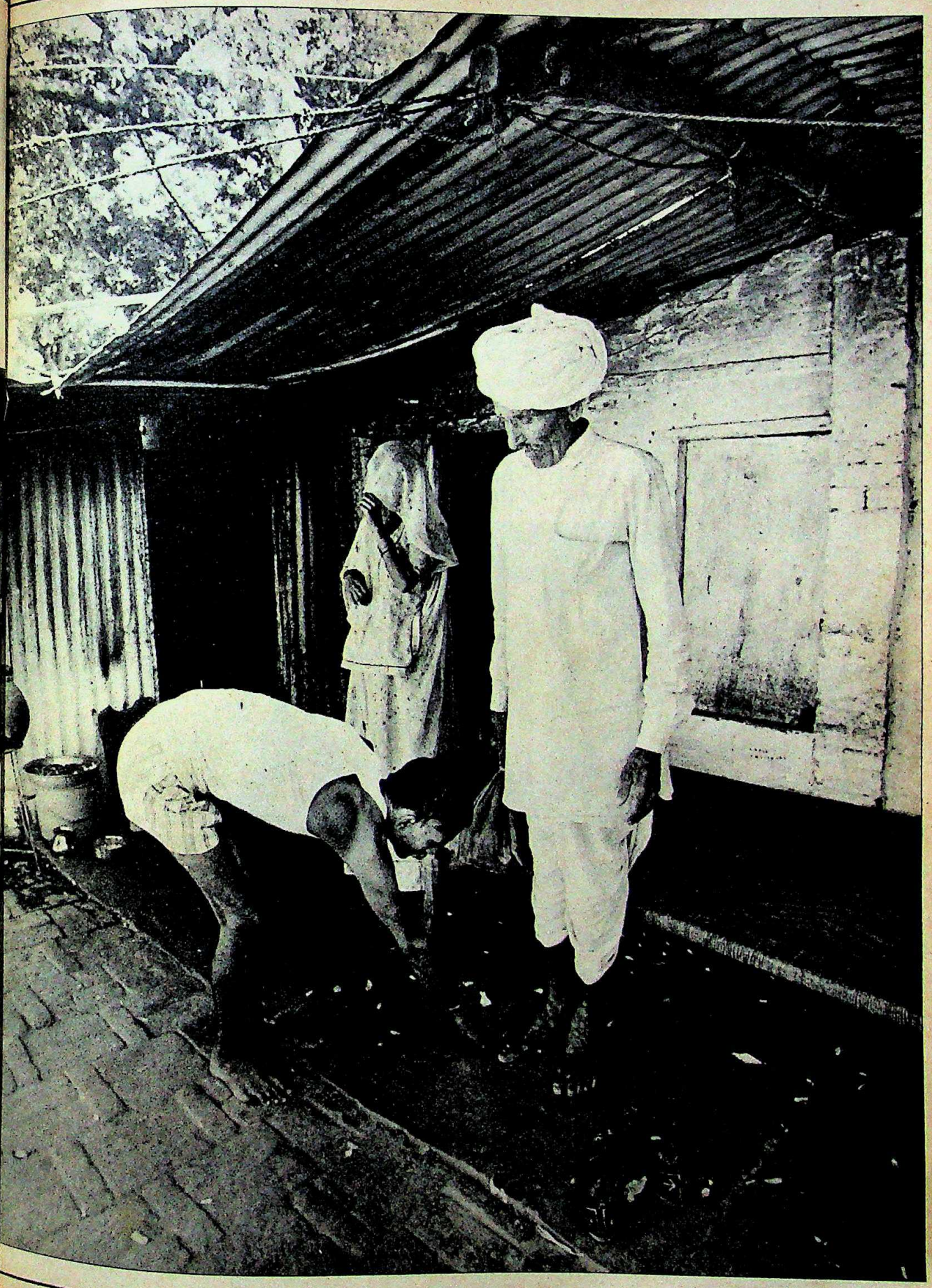

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DIPLOMAT'S KIDNAPPING

Serious Setbacks

With the lone suspect killed, the police fumbles

IN an age where kidnappings have become commonplace, the abduction of Romanian diplomat Liviu Radu has kicked up an uncommon amount of dust. If the abduction had the Government cringing with embarrassment, the death of a prime suspect due to police fumbling set the investigation back by several paces.

The drama reached a fever pitch on the afternoon of October 16. New Delhi's police headquarters—which had filtered down information to some militant groups asking if any one of them wanted to negotiate with them—were in animated suspension. The reason: among the 50-odd calls received in response, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) had traced the clinching call to a public call booth outside Super Bazar. Before the suspect could finish the call, the booth was surrounded by the police.

But if the police for once acted with alacrity, the man was equally swift. Whipping out a Chinese-made pistol, he tried to make a quick getaway. But as he stumbled, he began firing wildly. Panic-stricken policemen returned fire aimlessly.

With three of the bullets hitting the suspect, killing him on the spot, the IB lost a vital clue. The police tried to save face by saying the suspected terrorist—later identified as Dev Pal Singh, a Khalistan Liberation Front (KLF) activist—had swallowed cyanide. They even claimed to be on the verge of a breakthrough.

But the facts were clearly otherwise. The police were, in fact, bumbling along, desperately clutching on to the flimsiest of clues. The first was a photograph of Radu in captivity delivered anonymously at the UNI office on October 12. It came with a note demanding the release of General Vaidya's killers—Sukha, Nimma and Jinda. The police followed up the slender lead by investigating where the polaroid film had been bought. At the same time, they launched raids to capture relatives of some terrorists to bargain for Radu's release.

Meanwhile, Radu's wife complicated matters by flaying the Government for dithering on the abduction. In doing this, Caterina Radu struck at the very root of the problem—the Government's wishy-washy policy on kidnappings. Releasing General Vaidya's killers would put the Government in a legal fix. Sukha and Jinda have already been convicted while Nimma's appeal is pending before the Supreme Court.

Clearly, pressure was mounting on the Government. It claimed that Caterina Radu's views didn't represent the Romanian Government's. But it only came out with egg on its face as the Romanian prime minister expressed his surprise at the Indian Government's inability to have the diplomat freed.

The militants, too, stepped up the pressure. On October 16, the KLF, the Khalistan Commando Force, the Sikh Students' Federation (Bittoo) and the Bhindranwale Tiger Force despatched a letter saying if Vaidya's killers were not released by October 19, they would assume "that the Indian Government wants Radu dead".

The Government decided to go on the offensive. The Home Ministry indicated that it was considering the death penalty for kidnappings. The Government also suspected Pakistan of masterminding Radu's abduction. Romania sent feelers asking Pakistan to intervene to get Radu released.

Interestingly, other militants too tried to use Radu as a bargaining chip. First, there was Shiromani Akali Dal (Mann) President Simranjit Singh Mann's appointment with the US ambassador. The purpose: to negotiate the release of two militants—Sukhi and Kuki—in US custody. Then another militant group demanded the release of the two gunmen arrested in Romania for the attack on Indian envoy Julio Ribeiro.

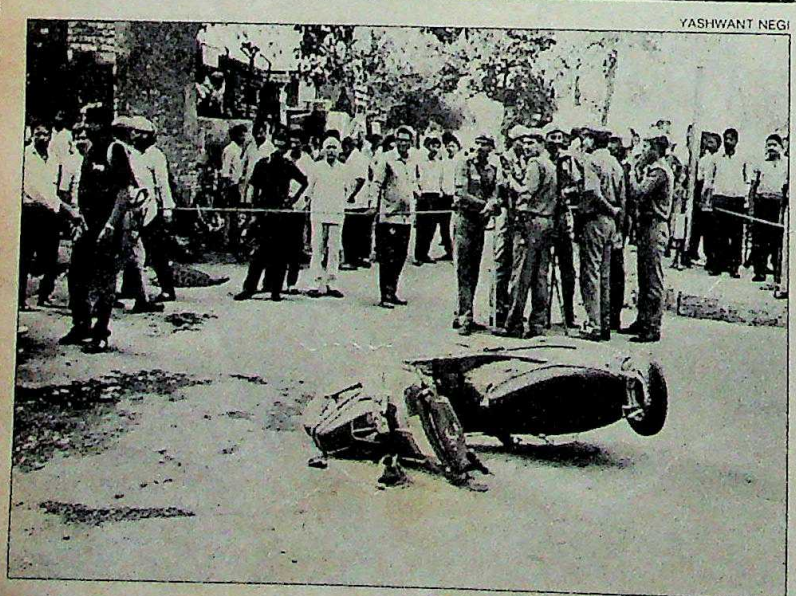
Meanwhile, the October 19 deadline elapsed and the clamour for Radu's release became louder. Even as the deadline was later extended to October 23, the Government continued to dither and dawdle, exposing once again its paucity of policy and will on the question of kidnappings.

—RAHUL PATHAK

Caterina Radu; and (below) after the shoot-out in Delhi: mounting pressure

PRASHANT PANJIAR

YASHWANT NEGI



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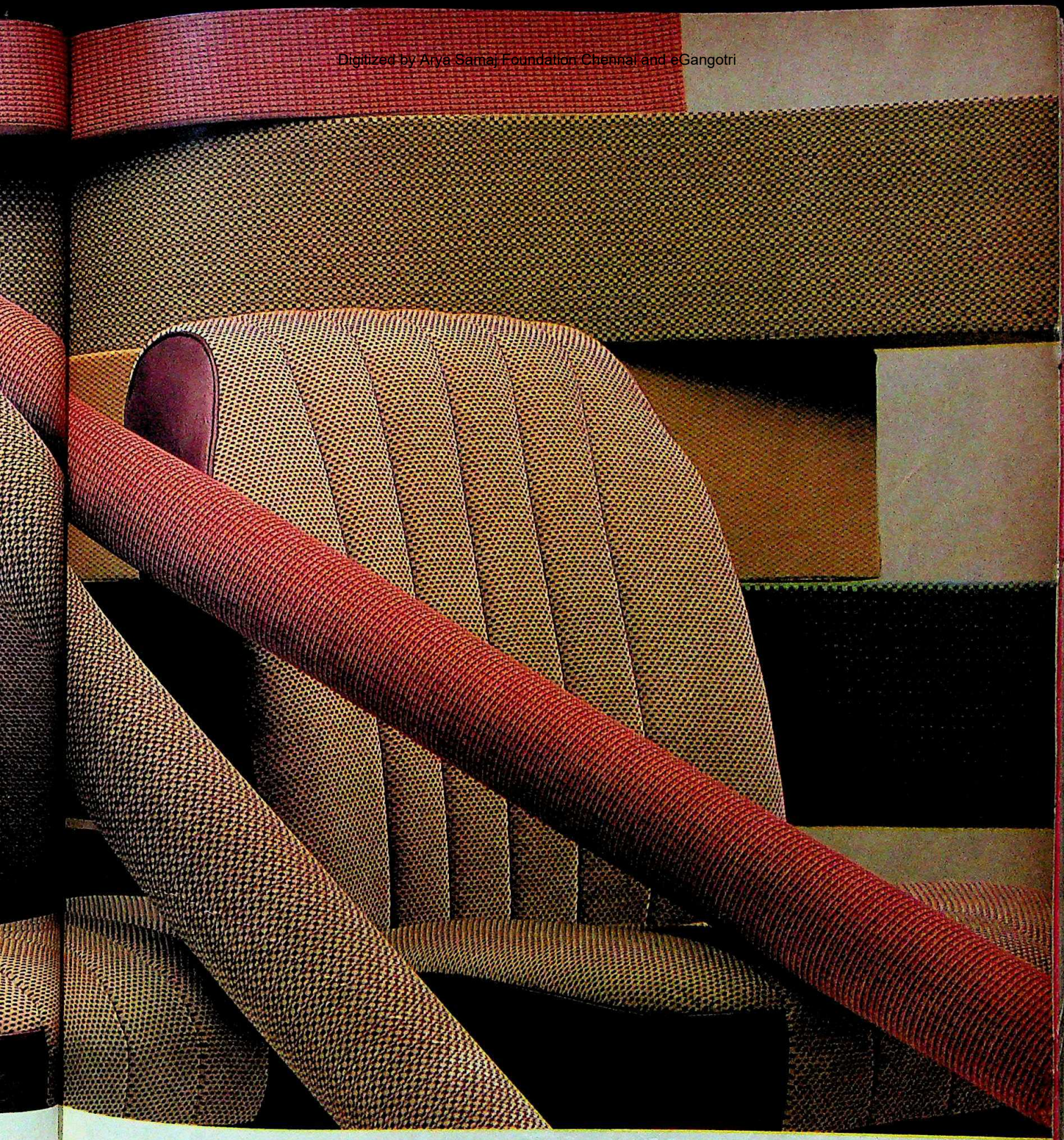

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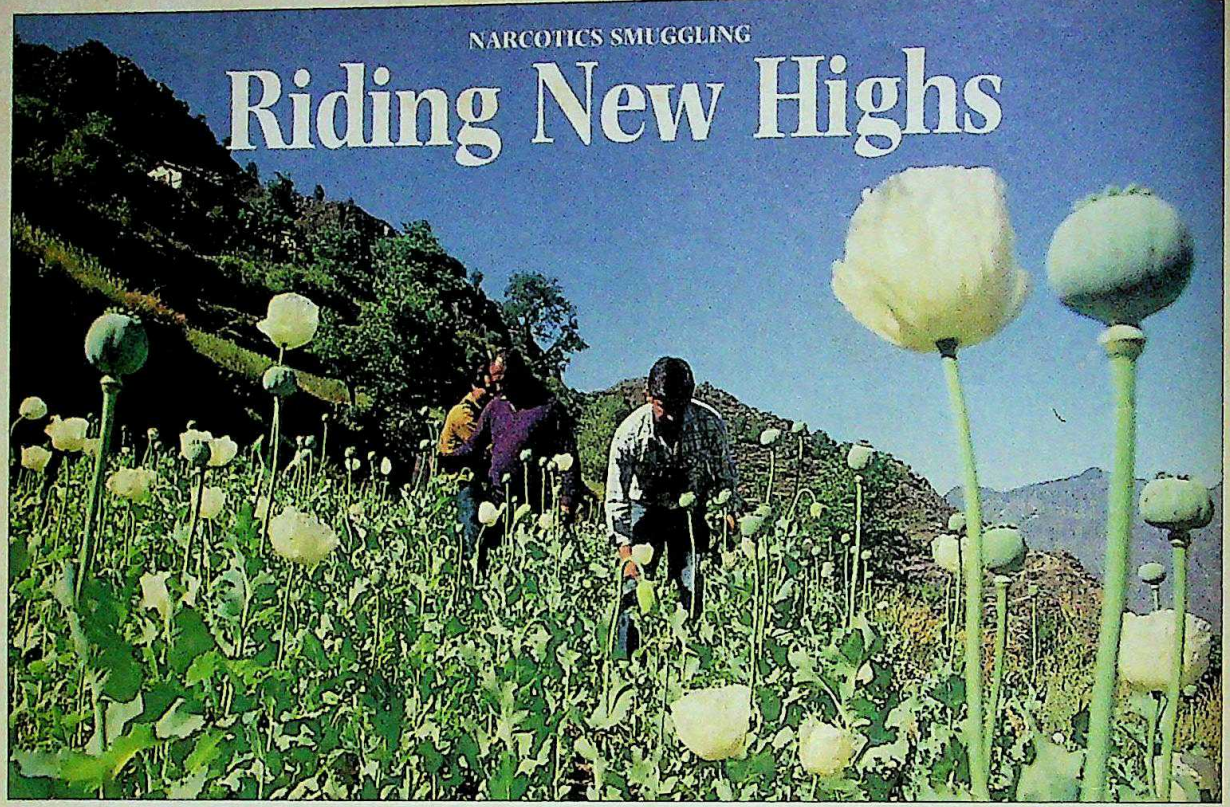
SHARAD SAXENA

NARCOTICS SMUGGLING

Riding New Highs

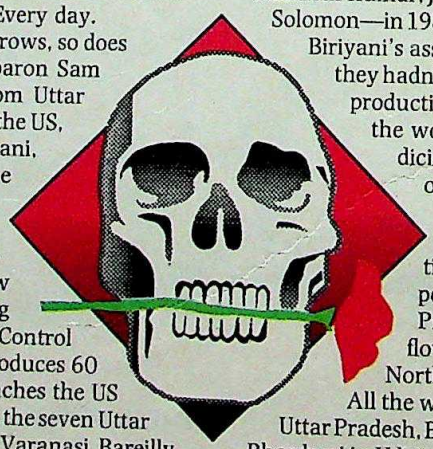


Poppy under cultivation in Uttar Pradesh

By ANIRUDHYA MITRA

THE myth regularly propagated by Indian officials is that the country is only a transit stop on the international drug map. The reality is dramatically different. India is now actually a leading producer. The share of Indian-made heroin in the world market has soared to $2 billion, only a billion less than Pakistan, according to assessments made by the UN's International Narcotics Control Board. And while three-quarters of its produce wings its way abroad, over Rs 3 crore worth of heroin and hashish is sold on the streets of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Every day.

And as the fiefdom of Indian drugs grows, so does the number of claimants. With drug baron Sam Biriyani behind bars, a new cartel from Uttar Pradesh is muscling in on his exports to the US, Europe and Australia. And unlike Biriyani, who dealt only in Burmese heroin, the new consortium manufactures its own. Barabanki-based Jasim, and Nasir Ali—two-time MLA from Shahjahanpur—have emerged as the new drug lords with their tentacles spreading outwards. According to the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), the Ali-Jasim combine produces 60 per cent of the Indian heroin which reaches the US and 70 per cent of what gets to Europe, in the seven Uttar Pradesh districts of Barabanki, Ghazipur, Varanasi, Bareilly, Rampur, Shahjahanpur and Dehra Dun. The potential heroin yield from these districts is estimated at $3 billion.



Ali and Jasim, along with Trideep Banerjee of Delhi, Mahinder Singh Chauhan of Bareilly and Birender Rai of Lucknow want more than just a prime piece of the world's heroin market. They are inching their way towards Biriyani's monopoly of Burmese heroin, the purest and most expensive of its kind, even as the NCB looks on. From 3,029 kg of heroin in 1988 and 2,714 in 1989, the haul came down to 2,093 last year and a paltry 395 kg till September this year, despite a substantial increase in incentives for informers and officials.

NCB Director-General Chinmay Chakraborty admits that the new cartel bests Biriyani's professionalism. Officials had thought the arrests of Biriyani along with those dealing mainly in Pakistani heroin—Jindo Malhotra, Rajni Patel, Yudhistir Kumar, Jasvir Singh Sandhu alias Jassi and Ashok Solomon—in 1988 would reduce trafficking. Especially as Biriyani's assets were estimated at Rs 600 crore. But they hadn't reckoned on the flood unleashed by the production of poppy. India is the only country in the world which produces licit opium for medicinal purposes. The diversion of licit opium—from which heroin is produced—and cannabis, the base for hashish, along with their unlicensed cultivation has put India in the big league. While poppy is grown in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, cannabis fields flower in Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Bihar, the North East, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

All the while, the confederacy of Ali and Jasim in Uttar Pradesh, Bhogi Lal Shah in Rann of Kutch, Ashwini Bhardwaj in Udaipur, Chauhan in Bareilly as well as Rai in Varanasi and Ghazipur has grown in strength. The new cartel is aiming its sights higher: Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Japan, Australia, even Africa. And through underhand political dealings and legitimate business ventures, they have become formidable foes. Says NCB Deputy Director-General Dalbir Singh: "They can eliminate anybody who comes in their way. They generally fight us with the best legal brains.

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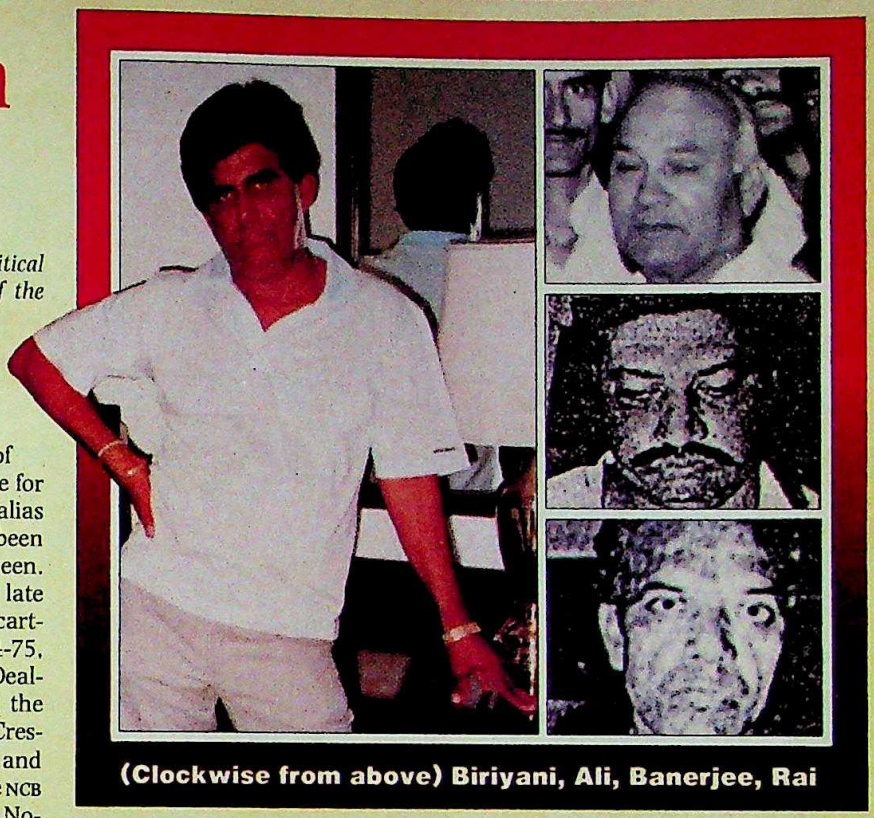
DRUG LORDS

Making a Killing

THE new drug lords merge political clout with shrewdness. Profiles of the kingpins from the files of the NCB.



(Clockwise from above) Biriyani, Ali, Banerjee, Rai

Sam Biriyani

From Tout to Tsar

FROM the pavements of Connaught Place to the stone walls of Tihar Jail, it's been a circular ride for Gurbax Ananthram Biriyani alias Sam Biriyani. But there have been more highs than lows in between. Beginning as a petty tout in the late '60s, Biriyani, 49, graduated to carting hashish for hippies. By 1974-75, he was controlling the supply. Dealing in heroin produced both in the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent, he sent drugs to the US, UK and the Netherlands. In mid-1987, the NCB put him under surveillance. By November the same year, five members of his syndicate were arrested.

So far, 'Boss' Biriyani is estimated to have smuggled out more than 1,000 kg of pure heroin. The payments were received through companies such as Video World Studio, Biriyani & Dadlani Sales Agency Pvt Ltd, Prem Fancy Corner in Bandra, and Twinkle Beauty Parlour. Even now, Biriyani's empire flourishes. He has wide-ranging legal businesses: real estate, two studios producing television serials, private taxis, hotels, restaurants, bars, export of children's garments and stocks. And such is his influence that he has escaped judicial custody at least twice.

Nasir Ali

Muscling in on a Monopoly

THE 56-year-old is one-half of the duo which controls a fast-growing drug cartel in India. With enough money stashed away in various operations, Ali's clout in politics has been enviable. He has represented Shahjahanpur as an MLA, first as a Lok Dal candidate in 1980 and then on a Congress(I) ticket in 1985. This, despite having twice been caught carrying drugs.

Ali has made forays into legitimate deals, yet some dirt has stuck. It rubs off on professional politicians too, as in May 1989, when a national daily front-paged a photograph of him rubbing shoulders with prominent Janata Dal leaders. That short-circuited his electoral career. Despite switching to the Janata Dal in 1989, he had to fight the elections as an independent. He lost. This time, he opted for a pilgrimage to Mecca. His partner, 48-year-old Jasim's syndicate is divided in two: brothers Javir and Sabir handle one combine while eldest brother Hassim runs the other with sons Matlu and Margub. It is the sons who package the raw harvest and then launder the take. Which continues to grow.

Birendra Rai

Feudal Scion to Heroin King

FORTY-four-year-old Birendra Kumar Rai could have had a fortune for the asking. But the scion of a well-to-do feudal family of Ghazipur district in Uttar Pradesh chose to make his own. From selling heroin *pudias* (packets) at his Varanasi college, Rai moved up to converting Ghazipur opium. Using his political contacts, he opened heroin laboratories in Delhi's Malviya Nagar, Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh and Andheri (West) in Bombay.

When the Bombay laboratory was raided by Customs in May 1986, Rai managed to flee. The Maharashtra Government issued a detention order under COFEPOSA but it was only in 1989 that Rai was picked up from Varanasi airport. However his business is far from bust.

Trideep Banerjee

Travelling to a Big Break

BORN into a middle class Bengali family in New Delhi, Trideep Banerjee showed no signs of becoming a drug king. He had just finished his schooling in 1970 when family compulsions forced him to start working. It was while he was working for a Paharganj travel agency, that he came into touch with foreigners who came to India to procure heroin.

His first assignment was for an Austrian couple in 1978. His consequent arrest at Rome airport with 800 gm of heroin was the biggest break of his life. The three-year prison term in Rome gave him the sought-after entry into the globe-trotting drug market. Returning to India in October 1981, he used his father-in-law's brassware business as a front and smuggled out over 200 kg of pure white heroin to the US and UK. In Tihar Jail since 1988, Banerjee continues to direct drug traffic. —ANIRUDHYA MITRA

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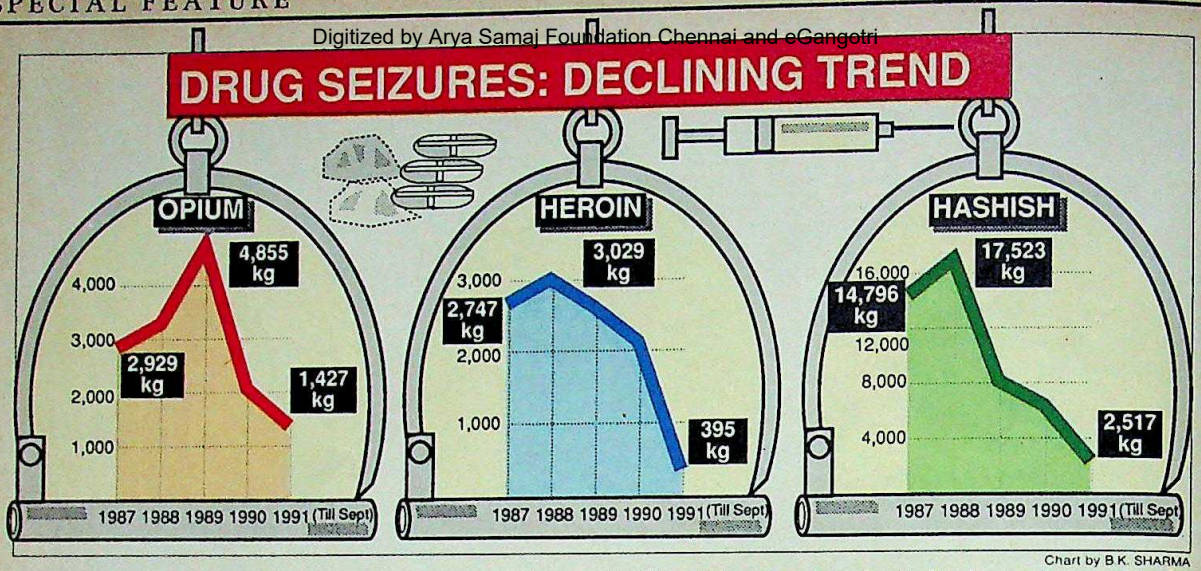


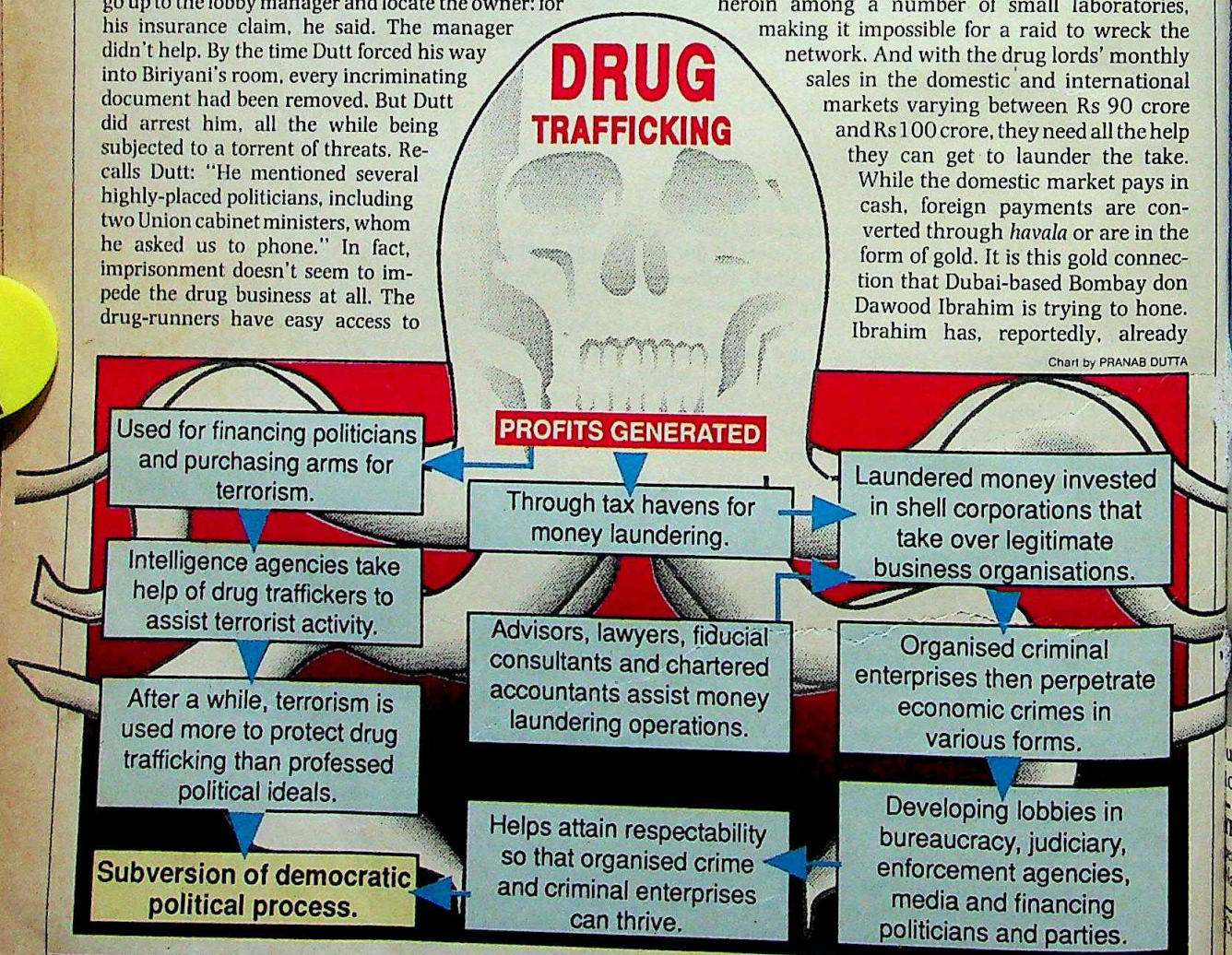
Chart by B.K. SHARMA

Often they get false cases registered against our men to keep us engaged in frivolous work."

Sometimes, they just plain outsmart them. Biriyani has slipped the drug enforcement dragnet many a time thanks to excessively hospitable hotel staff. Which explains this instance: on May 27, 1988, NCB Deputy Director (Operation) Devendra Dutt spotted Biriyani's car at Bombay's Hotel Centaur. He made sure he damaged it and used the excuse to go up to the lobby manager and locate the owner: for his insurance claim, he said. The manager didn't help. By the time Dutt forced his way into Biriyani's room, every incriminating document had been removed. But Dutt did arrest him, all the while being subjected to a torrent of threats. Recalls Dutt: "He mentioned several highly-placed politicians, including two Union cabinet ministers, whom he asked us to phone." In fact, imprisonment doesn't seem to impede the drug business at all. The drug-runners have easy access to facilities. Often they get admitted to hospitals or seek to be produced in court. When they get there, they are masters even of their circumscribed universe: they hold parleys with subordinates, make calls from their lawyers' chambers, or finalise deals sitting in cars parked on court premises.

With all their functions divided, the losses of the drug-runners are also minimised. The Ali-Jasim combine typifies this. It has dispersed the simple conversion of opium into heroin among a number of small laboratories, making it impossible for a raid to wreck the network. And with the drug lords' monthly sales in the domestic and international markets varying between Rs 90 crore and Rs 100 crore, they need all the help they can get to launder the take. While the domestic market pays in cash, foreign payments are converted through *havala* or are in the form of gold. It is this gold connection that Dubai-based Bombay don Dawood Ibrahim is trying to hone. Ibrahim has, reportedly, already

Chart by PRANAB DUTTA



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ALL THE PRESIDEN'S M

Cut out this cartoon and display it on your board. Then watch for reactions. Would you be surprised if people saw some of their colleagues in t

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EN'S MEN

"YES" is a nice, safe word. Especially if you are saying it to the boss. "YES" is an even nicer word to hear if you are the boss. But "YES" is a dangerous word. It hides the hypocrite, the sycophant and the lazy mind. And that's a pity. Because a company's finest asset is its unique collection of individual minds. People with minds of their own, who have something valuable to say. Very often that valuable something is the word "NO" NO to mediocrity. NO to the commonplace. NO to the status quo. It is a big word. "NO" It has often been the first step in the world's greatest discoveries. It could be the first step to a profitable change for your Company.

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DISSENT: THE VOICE OF PROGRESS

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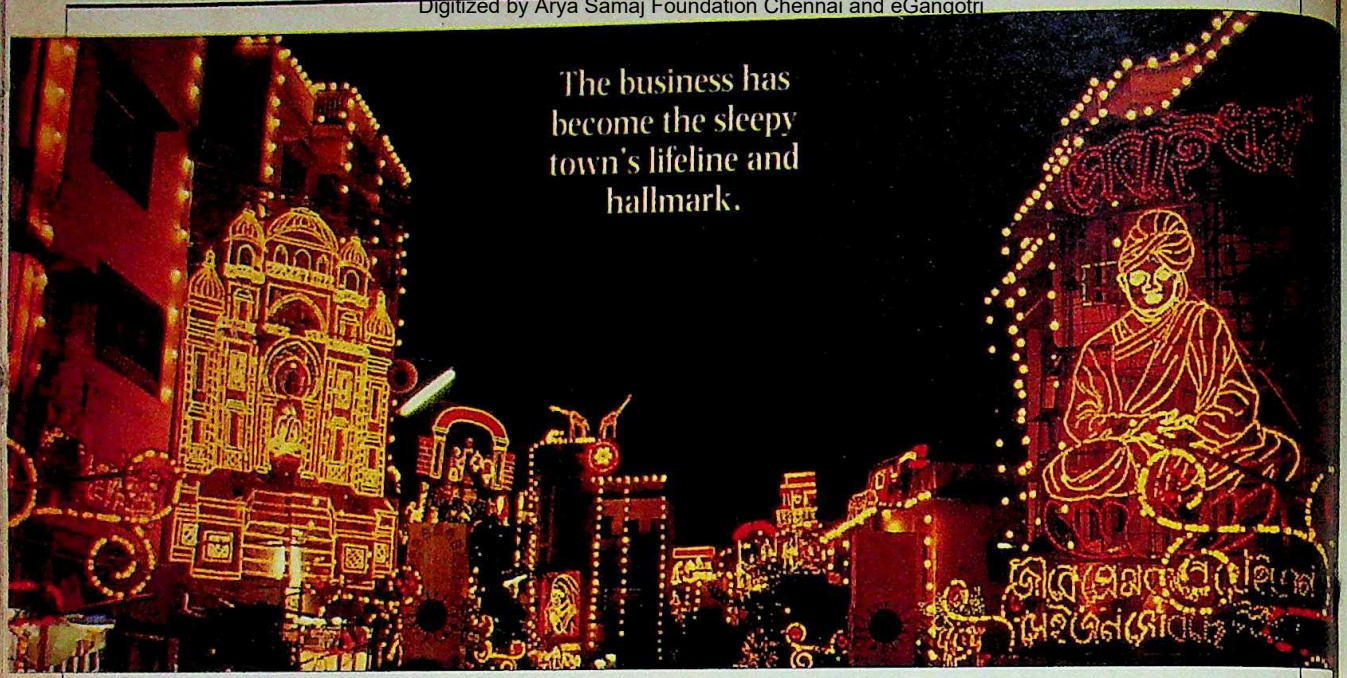

popular work of veritable art.

As Chandannagore is teeming with electricians and ideas, competition is fierce. Each one of the 200-odd electrical companies tries to leave its mark by doing something unique and innovative every year. The big-timers like Sridhar Das of S.D. Electrics and Tarak Sett of Tarak Electric Company wouldn't even touch something predictable as the Rajiv killing. And as intellectual property rights are still a gleam in Carla Hills' eyes, they keep surprises rolled up their sleeves. Das' offering this year was a very realistic replication of the Seven Wonders of the World. And Sett worked on an unusual subject: the devaluation of the rupee.

As the light brigade never fails to surprise and entertain year after year, demand for their work has kept soaring. "Illuminations from Chandannagore are our biggest draw," says Partha Pratim Kundu, an organiser of the Purba Manicktala Community Puja in Calcutta. "The Chandannagore wizards have no parallel," agrees Bhabani Dasgupta of the Dakshin Kolkata Puja Committee. These are the people who try to entice the best work from Chandannagore—at any cost. Purba Manicktala this year upped its illumination budget by several thousand rupees and Dakshin Kolkata doubled its to Rs 50,000.

Having hit the big time, the industry in Chandannagore is buoyant. Ten years ago, there were just a dozen electricians. Today, there are over 200. "Fancy lighting has become a part of Chandannagore's culture," points out Das. Skills are passed on from master to handyman. During each Puja season, a dozen rookies are certain to surface.

Many of the old-timers in the trade have achieved fame and riches. A beacon for upcoming electricians is Sridhar Das. Self-educated, his first assignment three decades ago was worth a royal Rs 14. Today, he lives in a swanky house with a portico crammed with gleaming Marutis. His undeclared business is worth many lakhs of rupees. Assisted by a score and more workmen, he picks and chooses his assignments which have to be worth at least Rs 50,000. This year for the Kali Puja in Amherst Street, he was allowed a budget of over Rs 4 lakh.

TARAK Sett too dictates terms, as he is in demand even in faraway Jamshedpur and Agartala. Contract offers come in dozens, but he accepts only a few. The reason: illumination is an excruciatingly time-consuming operation and the masters of the craft keep projects during a Puja season down to three or four to maintain standards.

Once the master has decided on a theme, artists are called upon to draw the images. Wire frames are made accordingly and affixed with hundreds of light bulbs. Then follows the laying of intricate circuits. These preparations go on for close to four months before the Puja season, turning the mundane Chandannagore into a beehive of activity.

The panels used by the light brigade follow a narrative style in the fashion of the traditional illustrated scroll. The moving finger of electricity having writ, moves on to tell the story: be it the infamous assault on Mamata Banerjee by CPI(M) goons or the disrobing of Draupadi, the two best-selling themes of illumination shows last year.

What is a source of endless enthralment outside has proved to be an open sesame of employment for the young people of Chandannagore. Desperate for a job, Nabakumar Pal, 26, slogged it out for a few years in an electric company. Four years ago, he floated his own firm, N.P. Electric. School drop-out Aloke Sarkar's story is no different. Today, he too is proud of his own company and an annual turnover of Rs 2 lakh.

Pal and Sarkar's stories set others on entrepreneurial journeys. They beg, borrow and start their own workshops. Investment need not even be very big—Babloo Sett started his Narayan Electric with a humble Rs 5,000. Yet, assignments of as much as Rs 10,000 start pouring in. The only flaw is that business is seasonal. Beginning four months before the festive season, it lasts till Durga, Kali and Jagadharti pujas are over. Which means labourers find work for at most half the year. Then too, their daily wage ranges from Rs 20 to Rs 40. But whether poring over the wire frames, tying bulbs or laying the circuits, the workmen dream of better times. The master electricians' work does not just light up the festive season of Calcutta. It also affords a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel for many. ■

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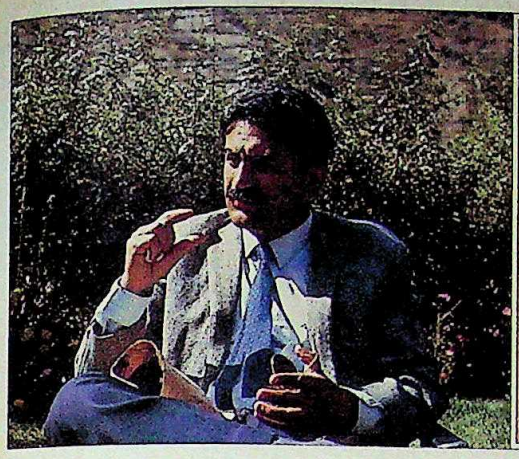


"Had the Government taken over the society's job, it would've made a mess of it."
NARINDER CHAUHAN
District Commissioner, Lahoul & Spiti

helped Lahoulis get there: the Lahoul Potato Society (LPS), the second largest primary cooperative in the country after Anand.

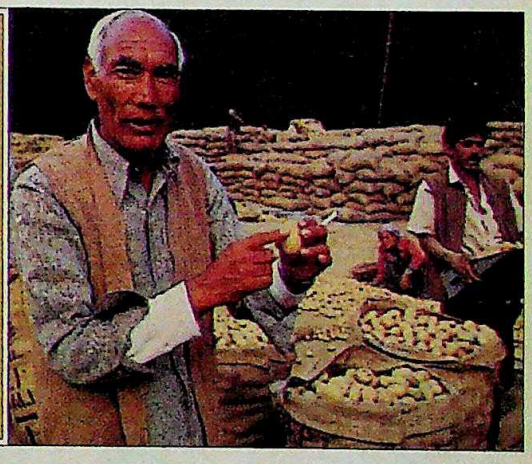
The 25-year-old agency, based in Manali, was the first to push for commercial cultivation of potatoes in the region. It arranges for seeds, fertilisers and gunny bags for farmers to be trucked up by November, before the roads are snowed under. The LPS picks up 80 per cent of the crop—the remainder is handled by private traders who controlled the business earlier—and ensures it reaches the *mandi* at Manali, a 71-km drive from the valley. Last year, it bought potatoes for Rs 140-160 for an 80 kg bag, more remunerative than rates offered by private traders. "Without the Lahoul Potato Society," says Govind Rowpa, a farmer of Ruding village, "we would have been at the mercy of the traders."

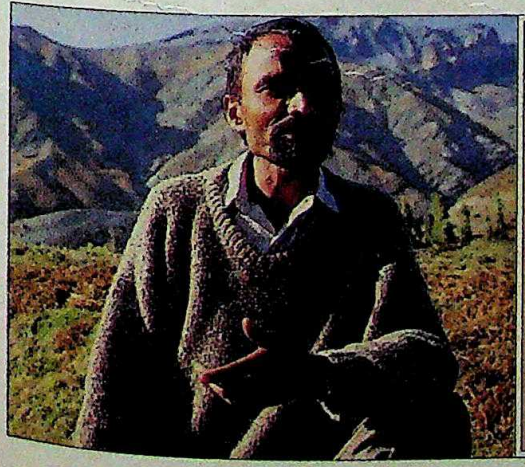
For its 1,970 members, the LPS helps out a little more. For instance, the agency, which chalked up Rs 8 crore in sales last year, provides loans. And through a fleet of seven trucks, it also brings in essential supplies for the eight winter months and delivers it to members' doorsteps. In the valley, that could mean a stretch from Koksar to Dacha at the far end, a distance of almost 120 km along treacherous roads. During the winter, the LPS even pays for the education and upkeep of society members' children outside the valley. It works simply: the LPS picks up the tab, and later deducts it from the amount it pays the farmer for his crop. "If the Government had taken over the job," says District Commissioner Narinder Chauhan, "there would have been a whole new bureaucracy and we would have made a mess of it."

Currently, potatoes account for about 30 per cent of the valley's 8,000 acres of cultivable land. Except for peas, which are sent out of the valley and take up about 1,700 acres, the rest of the land is split between crops that are consumed locally—wheat, barley, buckwheat, pulses and a small amount of mustard seed. All of these fit the valley's June to October farming season. Now, the LPS is encouraging farmers to go in for other high-value vegetables with similar cycles such as cabbage and sugar beet. The National Seed Corporation officials say this will pay more than the Rs 3,500 an acre for potatoes. Even mushrooms. As a first step, the cooperative has bought a loss-making mushroom-processing factory near Kulu for Rs 40 lakh.

Hops, used for flavouring beer, is another potential Lahoul export, specially as the prime source, J&K, has dried up because of political trouble. Presently, a little less than 40 acres are used to grow hops—Mohan Meakin Limited, a major beer manufacturer, picked up the entire produce last year. At over Rs 14,000 an acre in earnings, hops are a step-up from potatoes, which is why the LPS is encouraging its cultivation. In a bid to grow further, the LPS has applied for World Bank help for a Rs 3.8-crore project to market vegetables and fruits such as apples and plums, which it plans to grow on currently unutilised land.

"The Lahoulis won't break the society even if they are offered extra money."
HARI SINGH THAKUR
Private Potato Trader, Manali





"Without the Lahoul Potato Society, we would be at the mercy of private traders."
GOVIND ROWPA
Potato Farmer, Ruding Village

It's this drive—and service—that makes the LPS an agency to reckon with. Even private traders agree. "The Lahoulis know they stand to benefit from the cooperative," says Hari Singh Thakur, who runs the largest private potato trading company in Manali. "They would not break the society even if extra money was offered to them for their produce." Even the proud Anand cooperative wouldn't mind a compliment like that. ■

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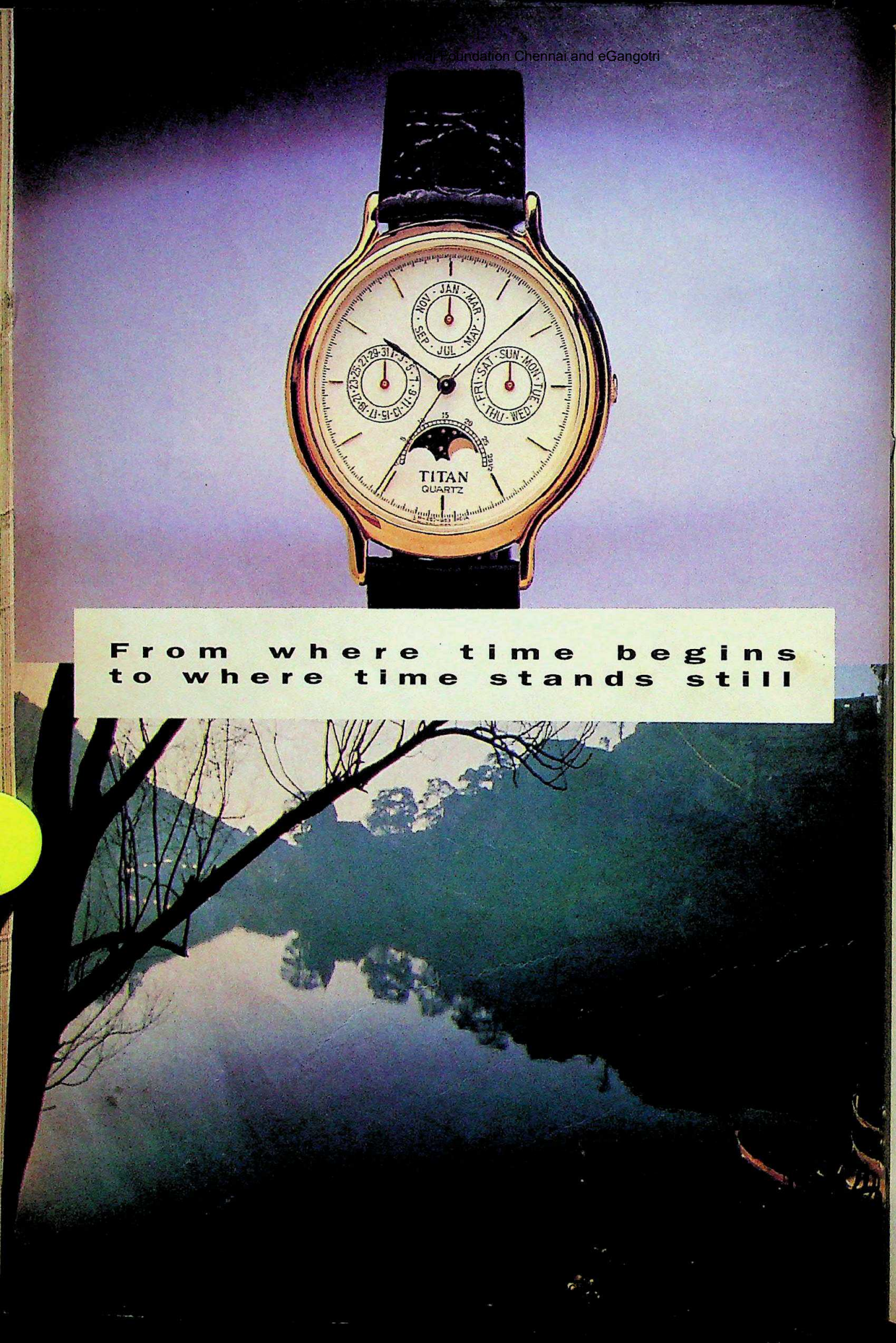

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Some of our frequent travellers cannot even read

Lufthansa

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STANDARD PROBLEM

WITH RBI Governor S. Venkitaramanan targeting 1993 for Indian banks to meet the Bank of International Settlements' standards of capital adequacy, greater attention will have to be paid to the creditworthiness of the Indian banking sector. Optimally, capital to risk-weighted asset ratio should be 8 per cent, while banks here have around 2 per cent. It will be a difficult task to handle. Estimates of bad loans in Indian banks vary from anywhere between 15 per cent and 25 per cent. Also, in order to meet its credit needs, the Government blocks about 62 per cent of bank deposits through the Statutory Liquidity Ratio, Cash Requirement Ratio and priority sector lending at low rates of interest. This is a major hurdle. And for the moment, there is no word from the RBI about restructuring the rules, perhaps because there is no word from the Government about curbing its deficit and politically expedient loans. Meanwhile, there is an immediate problem: because of their lower creditworthiness, Indian banks have to pay out more interest if they borrow money from abroad.

BANKING ON BANKS

THIS appears to be the time to get ready for a boom in private banking and finance. ITC Limited is talking of a tie-up with Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. Onida Finance Limited, an Onida group company, is currently scouting for people to man its merchant and personal banking, consumer finance and equity trading operations. There is also word that Hindustan Lever Limited has tied up with Deutsche Bank for a private banking venture, and Citibank N.A. is discussing similar proposals with "major" Indian companies, say executives. All that remains is an official go-ahead from the Finance Ministry to open up the industry.

MORE RELIEF

CONTRARY to the 1991-92 Union budget proposals, the Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices (BICP) may not be given the powers to regulate the price mechanism. Government officials say it is likely that the BICP will continue in its present form, as a recommendatory body. According to the budget, the agency was to be transformed into a Tariff Commission to fix tariffs and domestic prices—in sectors where Indian industry still needed protection from foreign competition and, determine administered prices in the area of public utilities. A section of policy-makers now believe that prices should be governed by free market forces. If this idea sticks, it will mean another kick to the licence-permit raj as well as make the power corporations and municipalities revenue collections freer.

TAKE YOUR RISK

RISK Capital and Technology Finance Corporation (RCTFC), a subsidiary of the Industrial Finance Corporation of India, plans to promote new technologies for industrial use in a big way. Under its scheme, newly-developed technologies would be bought over from scientists, who would be given financial assistance to embark on full-scale commercial projects. Says RCTFC Chairman B. Ratnakar: "If out of 10 projects, even three succeed we expect to make up for the losses." Besides research work, import substitution projects would also be encouraged. Applicants could opt for an equity participation in their projects, conditional loans, or capital loans based on profits.

FLAT FUNDS

AT a time when Indian companies are talking about setting up funds abroad, it's worth looking at how the existing funds are doing. The value of the India Fund, listed on the London Stock Exchange, stabled at 190 pence over August and September and Net Asset Value (NAV) increased, but was being discounted by 25 per cent *(see chart)*. The India Growth Fund, listed on the New York Stock Exchange, gained 2.5 per cent in September, while its NAV jumped 12.1 per cent. But discounts jumped to 10 per cent from the August levels of 2 per cent. The Himalayan Fund, listed in Amsterdam, also suffered from discounting, with levels jumping 14.8 per cent to 27 per cent, despite a rise in NAV. Not very good news—India may have to send out strong reformist signals before these draw better prices.

	AUG 1991	SEPT 1991
INDIA FUND		
Price	190p	190p
Net Asset Value	249p	252p
Discount	24%	25%
INDIA GROWTH FUND		
Price	$14.63	$15.00
Net Asset Value	$14.86	$16.66
Discount	2%	10%
HIMALAYAN FUND		
Price	$8.00	$8.00
Net Asset Value	$10.41	$11.01
Discount	23%	27%

Source: Quantum Financial Services Pvt Ltd.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

GET THE DRIFT?

FOR those who believe too much is being made of the trade disputes between India and the US, there's fresh news from Washington. The US has just announced an investigation of China's market access barriers for US imports. While the US complaints do not hinge on Intellectual Property Rights, they do relate to import restrictions, and technical barriers to trade such as testing and certification requirements as well as a failure to publish regulations which restrict imports. Most of these complaints are similar to those levelled against India. The investigations must be completed within a year, after which the Administration can contemplate retaliatory measures. India could find itself in a similar situation if it lulls itself into a false sense of complacency. It's a simple US bid for leverage, but that's how the game is played.

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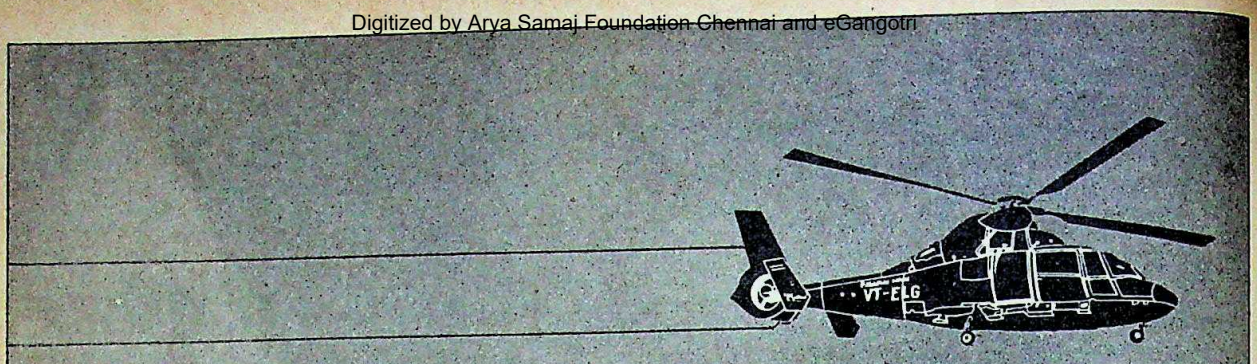

Some anniversaries pass by silently

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EXCISE & CUSTOMS DUTIES

Strapped for Funds

Fresh levies attempt to cover up the fiscal deficit

THE Central Government is caught in a bind. On the one hand, it needs money desperately to keep in check the fiscal deficit, which is threatening to break the Rs 37,727-crore barrier that it had set for the current financial year. But it is not really doing much about containing expenditure.

And on the other, there aren't very many sources the Government can squeeze for money. "Direct taxes can-not bear the burden much longer," says K.K. Dwivedi, chairman, Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC). For instance, personal income taxes are at the limit and corporate taxes were raised in 1991-92 budget along with a lessened provision for depreciation. "Much depends on customs and central excise," says Dwivedi. Together, these two indirect taxes are expected to bring in 76 per cent of Central Government revenue in 1991-92—customs with Rs 25,900 crore and excise, Rs 27,402 crore.

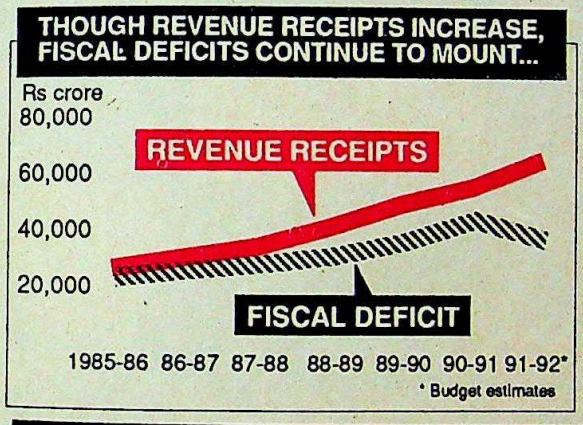
The problem is that customs collections haven't grown, due to import barriers. Between April and August this year, the revenue was Rs 7,594 crore, marginally above the same period last year. By end-September, collections had gone up to Rs 9,216 crore but were still short of the target by close to 10 per cent. It does not leave the Government much time to bring in the rest, so there is the remaining target: the excise option.

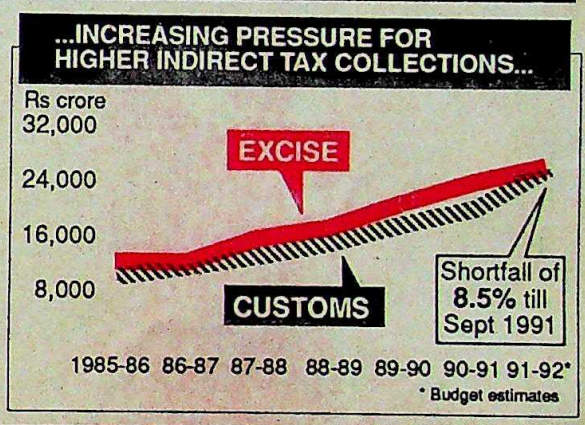
Officials say that Finance Minister Manmohan Singh has asked the Revenue Department to mop up an additional Rs 2,000 crore through excise. The think-tanks at the Directorate of Anti-Evasion and the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau are scooping out areas which can bring more revenue. Among the major targets being talked about: cement, the small-scale industry and marketing companies, which usually pick up products from a small-scale unit for tax-saving purposes, put their own label and push them. This is how the mandarins are looking at these targets.

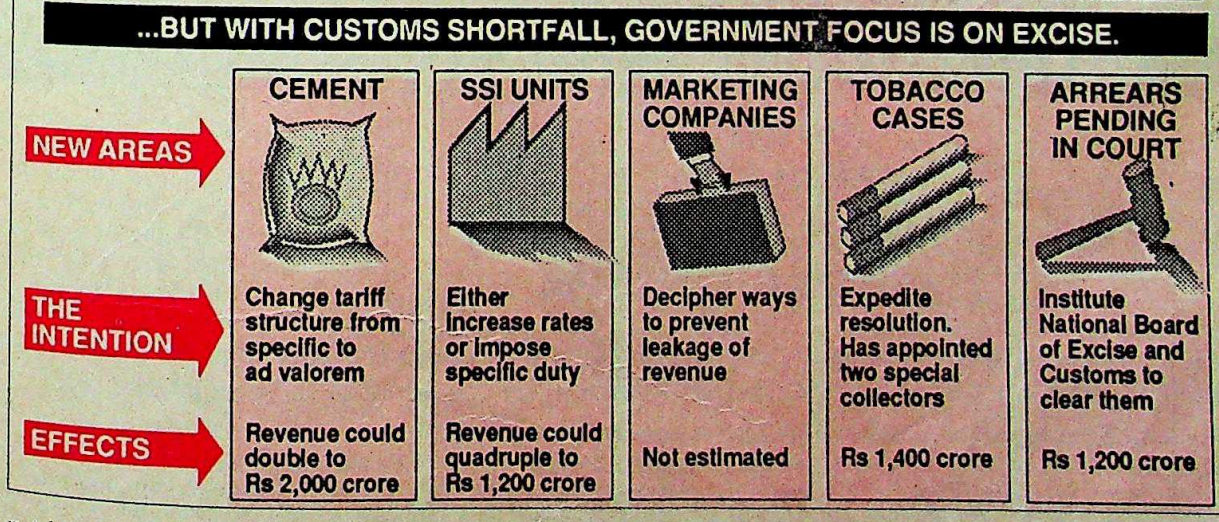
Cement: The present tariff on cement is Rs 225 per tonne. This was fixed early last year when the price of cement was between Rs 1,110-1,150 per tonne. Today, prices have doubled. Officials say that amending the tariff structure to an ad valorem basis of 20 per cent would yield a revenue of Rs 2,000 crore at the current price level, almost double of what is received now. However, there could be a problem, as the consumer will suffer. "Either the consumer bears the burden or the supplier, and in today's condition it will invariably be the former," says M.H. Dalmia, chairman, Orissa Cement Corporation. "But if the Government is crying itself hoarse about prices, how can they raise taxation?"

Small-scale Industries: From 26

Chart by B.K. SHARMA and PRANAB DUTTA







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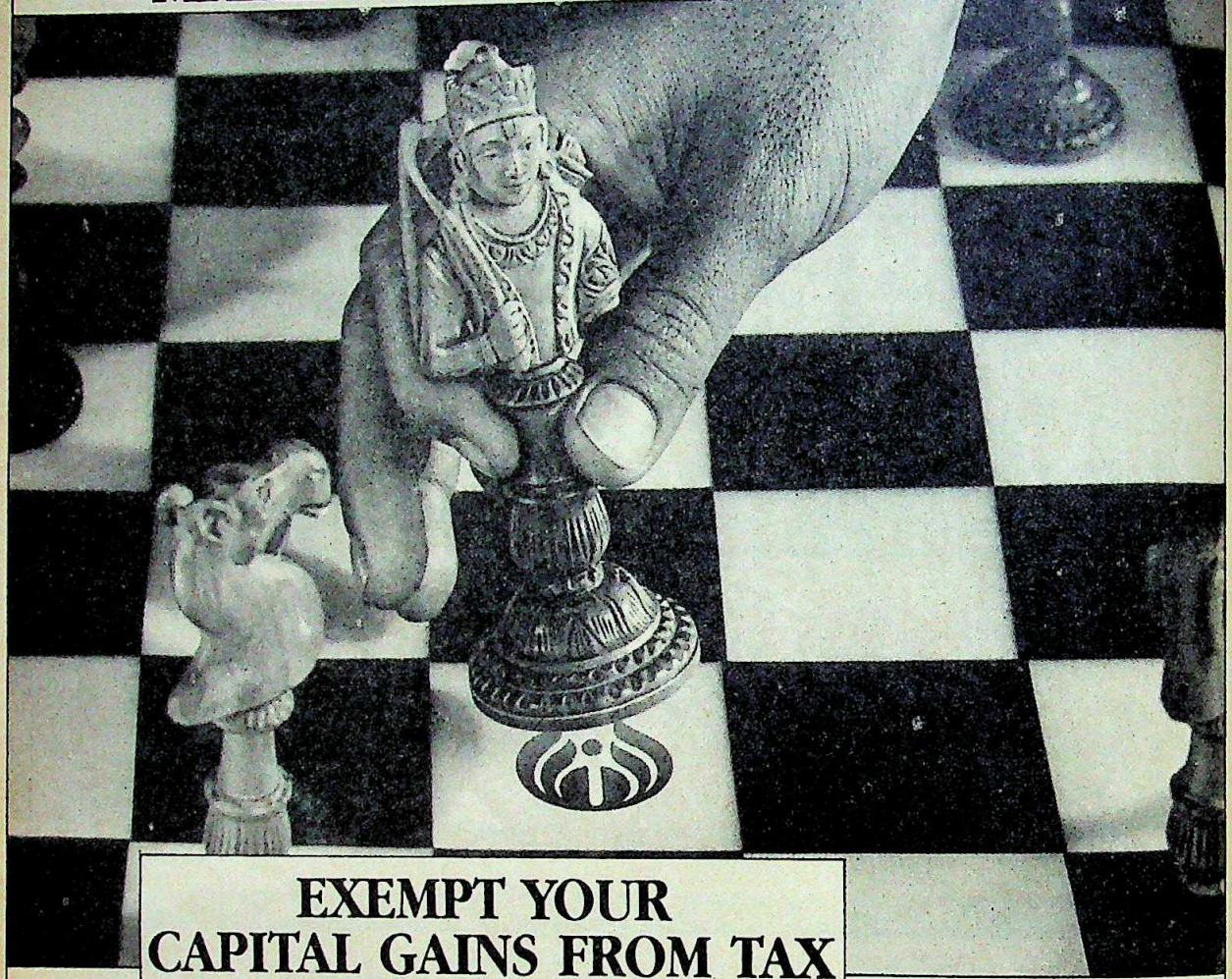

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lakh small-scale units, the Government receives Rs 300 crore of excise—or 1.2 per cent of total excise collections. That, feel officials, is a little lopsided as they account for 50 per cent of manufacturing activity. If they were to change the law, say these officials, the revenue collection could increase four times. Instances have been detected where established brand owners have floated several small-scale units to ensure that clearances never exceed Rs 2 crore, the maximum for small-scale concessions. "In each collectorate," says a CBEC member, "there are at least 2-4 cases of fragmentation." An example: a family of four runs 17 different units through various ownership permutations and combinations. Now, the Government wants to crack down, but hasn't—say officials—enough policing strength.

Marketing Companies: This is a major target, and could be hit to bypass the potentially explosive—politically—costs of tapping small-scale industries. Currently, excise is collected at the small-scale selling price. This is true, for instance of the cosmetics and toiletries industries—perfumes, soaps, toothpaste and shampoos. Even after taking into account packaging and advertising costs, marketing companies save at least 7 per cent in excise costs which they would have to pay out if they were manufacturing in-house. One hitch in tapping marketing companies: the law, which is now based on manufactured goods clearances, will have to be changed.

Other Measures: The Government wants to get all its cigarette excise problems out of the way. This may be a little ambitious as of the Rs 1,400-crore in back taxes demanded by the Government, almost all of it is still at the show-cause stage. Sometimes, as in ITC Limited's case, for as long as six years. CBEC's Dwivedi says his department has appointed two special collectors to deal only with cigarette cases. There is Rs 1,200 crore—excluding cigarettes—in excise demands that are tied up in courts. In order to get things going, the Government plans to set up a National Board of Excise and Customs.

The way things stand now, the Government is desperate enough to consider these options, no matter that the areas may be political minefields. It could require months to bring about the changes. In some ways, it may be easier if the Government just tried to reduce its expenditure.

—SHEFALI BHIMAL

SOFT DRINKS

Coke Calling

Britannia brings Coke back

IT'S clever. No direct links, a non-resident Indian facade and the promise of exports. After being out of the Indian market for 14 years, the Coca-Cola Company is not taking any more chances.

Neither is J.M. Rajan Pillai. On October 22 Pillai, chairman of Britannia Industries Ltd (BIL), met officials of the newly-constituted Foreign Investment Board in New Delhi to present a snack food and beverages project. This would be done through a new company, Britco Foods Company Private Ltd, a joint venture between BIL and JMRPCO Ltd, an offshore company promoted by Pillai. BIL will hold 24 per cent of the equity, the offshore company 60 per cent, and the remainder will go to a government agency—perhaps the State Industrial Corporation of Maharashtra. BIL will have the option of buying back this chunk. The company's equity capital will be $20 million (Rs 52 crore).

The Coke angle comes in through JMRPCO, in which it holds 40 per cent through a subsidiary, Coca-Cola South Asia Holdings Inc. Pillai—who runs a $400-million empire from Singapore—owns the rest. "Coke would have been in India one day," says he. "It was either us or somebody else." The clearance, says Pillai, is expected "in weeks", and can go on stream within a year from the date it is okayed.

The Britco project, to be set up near Panchgani in Maharashtra, is being pushed as a snack food project. Pillai exports $25 million worth of snack food a year out of Singapore. He plans to shift that business to India. The beverage business will constitute manufacturing soft drink concentrates for the sale of Coke's international brands, the Cola, Fanta and Sprite. Britco will import flavouring essence from Coke, and plans to make Rs 155 crore in concentrate sales in the first five years. The snack food export figure for the same period is Rs 281 crore, which Pillai expects will total Rs 1,000 crore in 10 years. Says he: "This isn't a pie-in-the-sky story. We mean it."

"Coke would've been in India one day. It had to be us or someone else...ours isn't a pie-in-the-sky project."

RAJAN PILLAI, Chairman
Britannia Industries Ltd

Illustration by AJIT NINAN and JAYANTO

The positioning as a snack food project is crucial, as it will mean automatic clearance in the new industrial climate. Otherwise, it will have to go through the time-honoured route of case-by-case clearance, as soft drinks are still on the restricted list for multinationals. As it stands, the proposal is without conditions—no export commitment, but that is taken care of by shifting business to India. And no controls on soft drink concentrate production. The organised soft drink retail market is estimated at Rs 600 crore a year, growing at about 15 per cent. Coke plans to grab a quarter of the share in five years. Among potential bottlers, Coke is thinking of using New Delhi-based Pure Drinks, its major pre-'77 associate which later branched out

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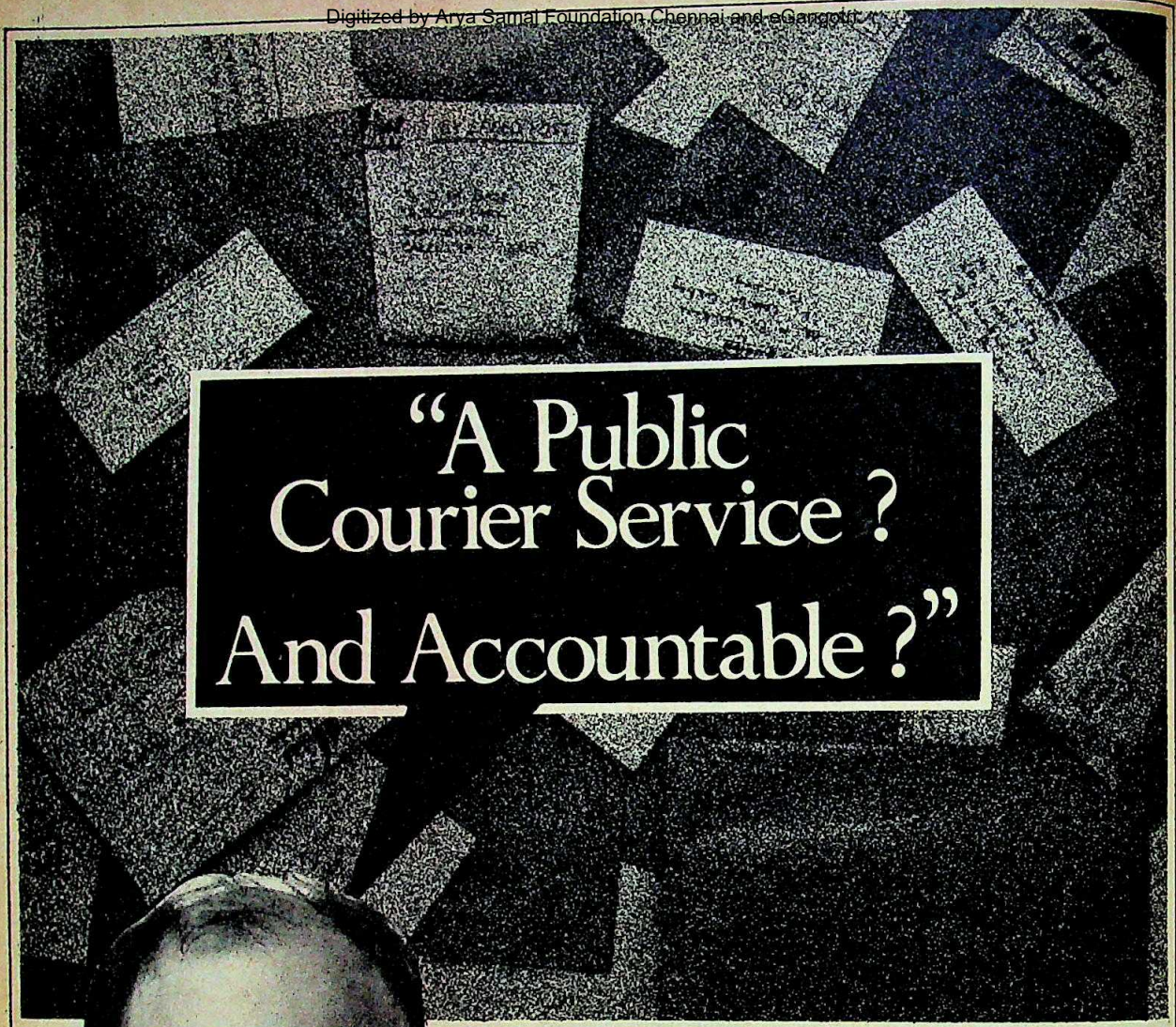

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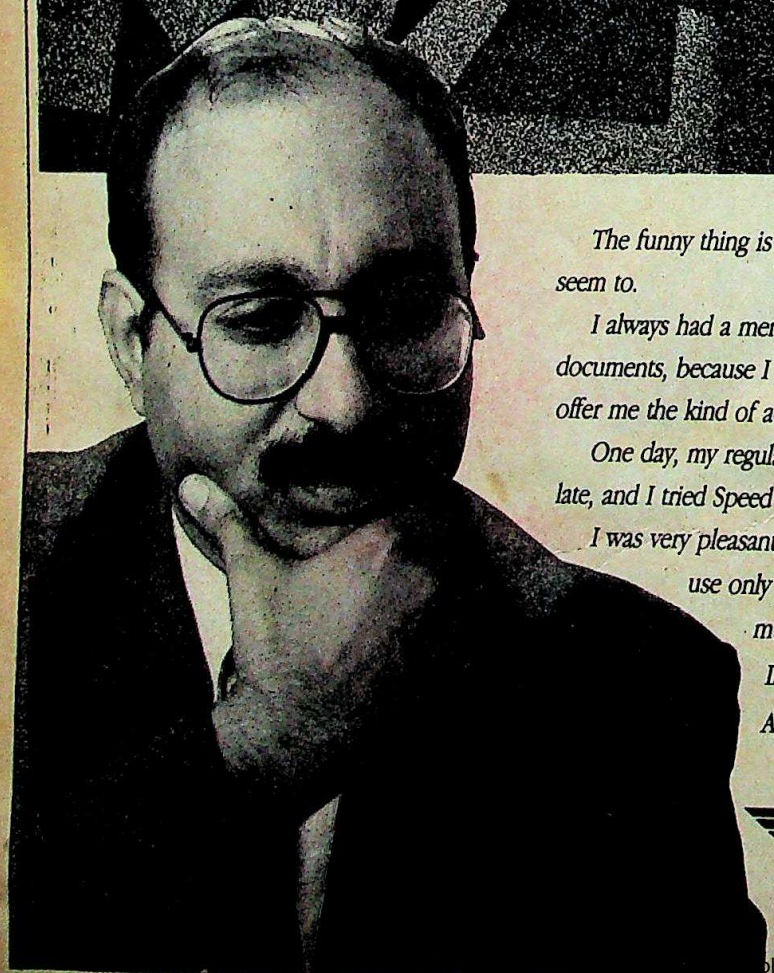

The funny thing is that, even when times change, minds don't seem to.

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to launch the Campa brand.

If it clicks, the deal will make PepsiCo International's efforts to break into India look a little silly. The Pepsi deal came after five years of stonewalling and finally, stiff terms. The pre-liberalisation project called for the Indian operation, Pepsi Foods Ltd, to export half its turnover, ensure that for every dollar it took out it had to bring in five in earnings for the first 10 years, and restrict its soft drink concentrate business to 25 per cent of the turnover. The remainder of the turnover has to be in food processing—tomato paste, processing and exporting other fruit and vegetables, and snack foods. Pepsi suffered losses of Rs 24 crore in 1990-91, on a turnover of Rs 15.46 crore, and expects to break even three years down the road. Pepsi also had to Indianise its soft drinks by pre-fixing Lehar to its brands. Coke hopes to retain the international names. "It is for the regulators to decide whether we got a raw deal or not," says Pepsi's vice-president for corporate communications Neel Chatterjee. "In 1988, that's the best we could do. That's how it is." As it stands, Pepsi will have to make do with what it has. The company has sunk in far too much money in the existing project to think of scrapping it and go for a Coke-style entry.

An entry that could expect fairly strong opposition from a person who gave Pepsi a very hard time, Parle Limited Chairman Ramesh Chauhan. The soft drinks don has a 60-per cent share of the market, and could get squeezed with Coke's entry. Already, Pepsi claims to have captured 25 per cent of the retail market, and there is a danger that two internationally competitive brands could push Parle to a corner when they begin battling in India. Also, a possibility of Coke tying up with Pure Drinks, a major competitor, is worrisome. Chauhan sticks to his usual stand. "If they do clear the Coke project, I think it will be another bad decision by the Government," he says. "We need investment to improve our infrastructure, not in soft drinks or snack foods." He goes on to add: "We're so foolish."

Industry analysts expect an anti-Coke campaign led by Parle, the Indian rival opposing Coke's entry, to build up.

The pugnacious Parle chief is already figthing back, for the moment, by trashing Coke's entry through a forum he controls, the All-India Soft Drinks Manufacturers Association. Industry analysts expect that an anti-Coke campaign may build up, designed to blow up during the winter session of Parliament beginning December. Industry observers say the best thing that can happen to the Coke proposal is that it's cleared in weeks as Pillai expects. As far as Pillai is concerned, a potential Chauhan threat is something that is factored in. "Everybody knows what his attitude is towards multinationals and soft drink competitors," says Pillai.

The Britannia chief is hoping that the Governnent's new attitude, which is markedly different from Chauhan's, will help pull the deal through. A positive indicator is IBM Corporation, which pulled out at the same time as Coke, but is now back with a collaboration with the Tatas. This could be the real thing. —SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI

MICROLIGHT AIRCRAFT

Taking Wing

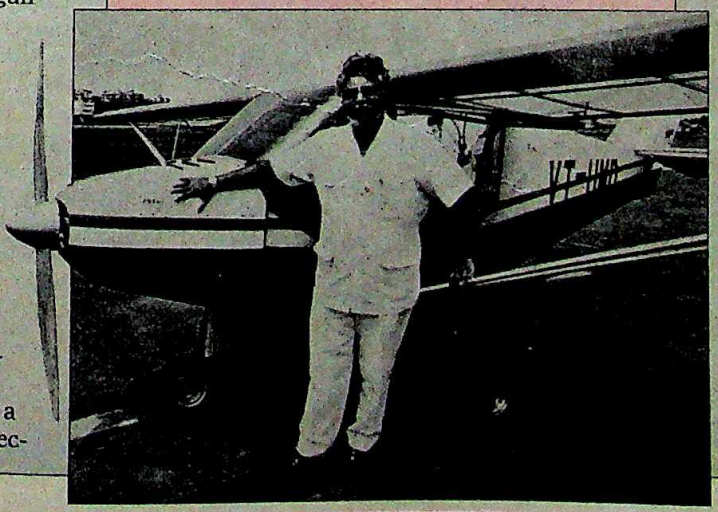
USUALLY, aircraft are sold from a simple marketing threshold: my plane is better than yours. Amin Merchant is pitching it a little differently: my plane is better than your car.

Merchant's Bombay-based company, Riviera Aircrafts, has begun marketing a microlight two-seater aircraft, the S-6, which is aimed at the top end of the executive market. The aircraft kit, which costs around Rs 9.5 lakh, is imported from US manufacturer Rans & Company, and assembled locally.

Positioned as a "commuter" for executives visiting factories or work sites in fairly remote areas, the aircraft has a range of 400 km, at cruising speeds of 135 km an hour, and needs 250 feet of even landing ground. What has grabbed the interest of some industrialists is that the S-6 uses ordinary petrol to power its 65 horsepower engine. "It's not cheap, but it will save executive time and we'll buy one," says Chakor Doshi, joint managing director of Bombay-based Walchandnagar Industries. Doshi feels it beats buying a second-hand diesel Mercedes Benz—which costs Rs 8 lakh—for his senior executives' travel. "It will make life easier for my executives," he says.

The S-6 costs Rs 9.5 lakh, has a range of 400 km, and uses ordinary petrol.

Merchant with his S-6 two-seater



Merchant is counting on equations such as Doshi's to sell out 30 microlights in the next six months. Riviera has a maintenance facility in Bombay and also offers pilot services for a fee. When business finally settles down, the microlight seller, who is better known in Bombay for selling artificial plants, plans to have a Rs 10-crore facility for assembly near Bombay.

—ARUN KATIYAR

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INTEREST RATES

Tight Money

As rates spiral, industry could be in for a recession

THIS is one busy season that a lot of people might like to forget. Especially when interest rates are hiked across the board—between 2 and 3 per cent a year—refinancing is curbed except for export and even export credit has been made so much more expensive.

Thanks to the RBI's policy, call money—what banks lend to one another—is expected to operate in the 18-45 per cent a year band with the average bank interest being pegged at 24 per cent. Prime borrowers may still be able to borrow at between 21 and 24 per cent. However, for most of the others, working capital loans could cost 28 per cent a year or higher.

And, bank loans for consumer durables, shares and real estate are frozen. The RBI's moves—a follow-up of the earlier credit squeeze in April—could pull out as much as Rs 9,000 crore from the bloated cash flows. The policy is also in tandem with import curbs—margin money for imports are still at 150 per cent of cost. This dual policy is designed to reduce the balance of payments deficit, the rising inflation—which is currently at 14.6 per cent according to official estimates—and at the same time make industry leaner, more competitive and, therefore, more productive.

There is a problem, however, as the plan may backfire in two ways. For one, it could drive up inflation. The National Council of Applied Economic Research estimates that the new round of curbs will add 0.5 per cent to the rate of inflation. Primarily because in India, increase in the cost of funds is inevitably passed on to the consumer. And secondly, it could spin India into an industrial recession. Mainly, because Indian industry isn't exactly known for its efficiency. For instance, businesses are only now beginning to grasp the idea of tight inventory management. For many years they have been pampered by easy availability of credit.

However, the Government is also to blame: instead of reducing its own ills—fiscal and budgetary deficits, for instance—through tough measures, it traditionally passes on the burden to industry, as it has done now. "Rather than curtail inflation," says S.V. Ambekar, vice-president, finance, with National Organic Chemical Industries Limited, "I see these policies resulting in an artificial recession."

Industry says it is already affected. While in-house cost-cutting is in full force, most companies are reacting by holding on to expansion plans. "It has restricted our ability to expand in areas like petrochemicals and polymers," says UB Limited Group Vice-President, finance, S.P. Nanda. "There is such a lack of working capital that we can't grow even though there is a market." Sudershan Kumar Birla says a Rs 100-crore modernisation programme for group company Saurashtra Chemicals is on hold at the moment for precisely the same reasons.

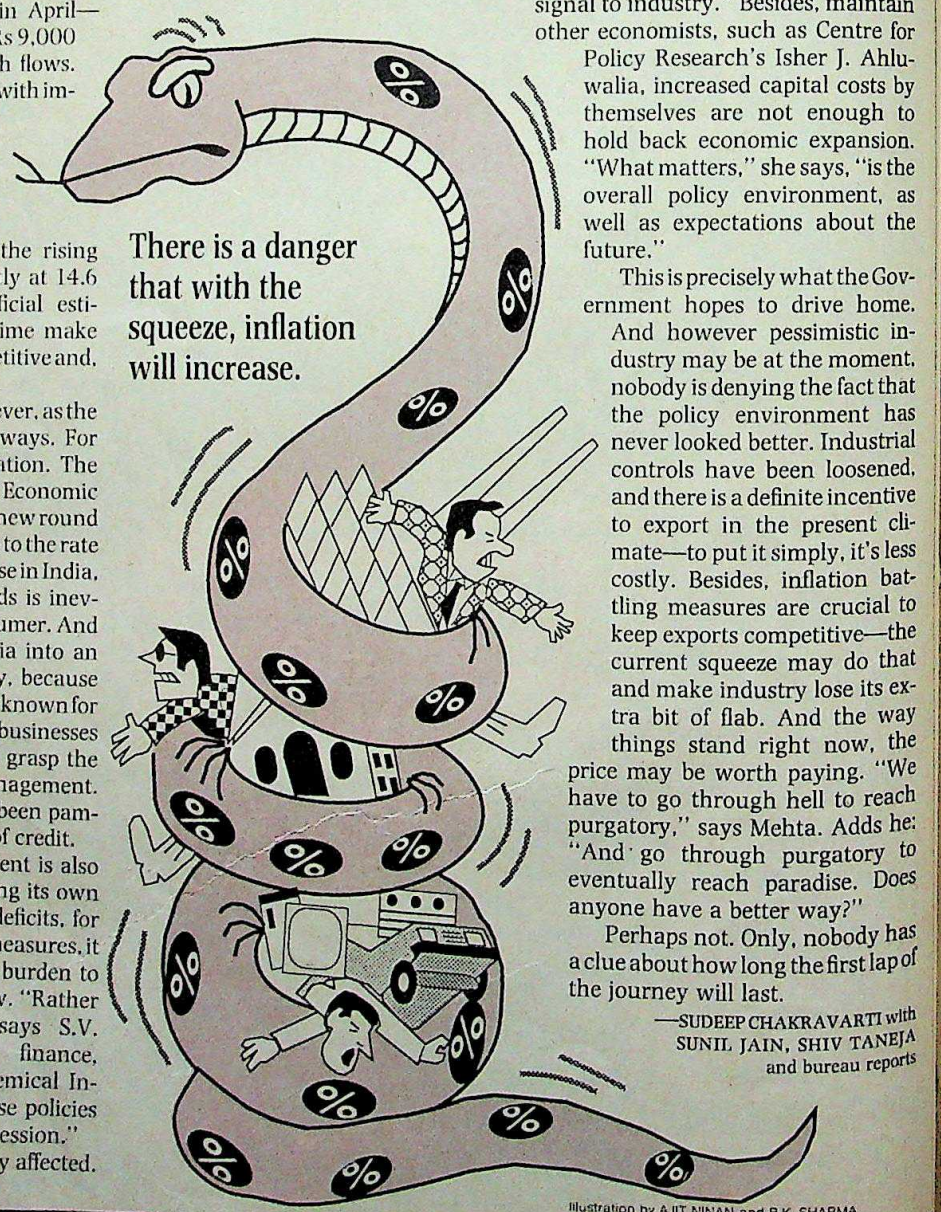
They're not the only ones. Freddie A. Mehta—economist, chairman of Forbes, Forbes, Campbell & Company, and a director on the board of Tata Sons Limited—says Forbes has slashed a Rs 350-crore expansion plan by Rs 100 crore. The clampdown could also lead to lessened turnovers for 1991-92. Madura Coats executives, for example, say a projected Rs 500 crore turnover could dip by Rs 25 crore.

However, there is a flip side too. There is an opinion that industry, instead of complaining, should get down to work. After all, interest rate hikes or not, they just have to spruce up their act. Says Sushil Khanna, professor of economics at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta: "It is a green signal to industry." Besides, maintain other economists, such as Centre for Policy Research's Isher J. Ahluwalia, increased capital costs by themselves are not enough to hold back economic expansion. "What matters," she says, "is the overall policy environment, as well as expectations about the future."

This is precisely what the Government hopes to drive home. And however pessimistic industry may be at the moment, nobody is denying the fact that the policy environment has never looked better. Industrial controls have been loosened, and there is a definite incentive to export in the present climate—to put it simply, it's less costly. Besides, inflation battling measures are crucial to keep exports competitive—the current squeeze may do that and make industry lose its extra bit of flab. And the way things stand right now, the price may be worth paying. "We have to go through hell to reach purgatory," says Mehta. Adds he: "And go through purgatory to eventually reach paradise. Does anyone have a better way?"

Perhaps not. Only, nobody has a clue about how long the first lap of the journey will last.

—SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI with SUNIL JAIN, SHIV TANEJA and bureau reports



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MODIS

Carping Over Carpets

The brothers wrangle over reviving a sick company

WHEN it comes to the Modis, it appears, that nothing comes easily. The latest wrangle is over the rehabilitation of Modi Carpets Ltd, which was declared sick in 1988 and is mired in losses and deep in debt. The company, under Satish Kumar Modi's wing, has accumulated losses of Rs 30 crore—a little over six times its paid-up capital—and owes banks and financial institutions Rs 36 crore. Though, strangely enough, the institutions and banks are not doing a thing about sorting out the mess.

Rehabilitation plans have got stalled because Satish's four siblings are unwilling to bring in the required interest-free funds of Rs 25 crore to Rs 30 crore for revival. This is despite an agreement between the brothers with the RBI and financial institutions, made last year in October.

The second option, a merger of Modi Carpets with Modi Rubber Ltd (MRL), is being opposed by Managing Director Virendra Kumar Modi. Virendra is also doing a turnaround—last year, he had agreed to a merger proposal orchestrated by the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction. "There is as much synergy between the two companies as there is between a man and a bear," he says. "Both have hair—that doesn't make them compatible." More importantly, he feels that the Rs 476-crore company would be forced to curtail its plans of expansion if it now agreed to take on the liability of Modi Carpets.

Brother Satish, of course, has a different angle. He feels that Modi Carpets and MRL are compatible on two counts. One, they use a common raw material, latex. Secondly, absorption of Modi Carpets' losses will mean a Rs 15-crore tax saving for MRL. The line doesn't wash well with Virendra, and Satish says he can't figure out his brother's reluctance to merge. "My brother", he says, "is acting funny."

It isn't quite as simple as that. Modi family insiders say that Virendra feels he is being cornered into a deal he doesn't want, especially as it lets the other brothers go completely scot-free. Perhaps, he isn't far wrong. Another brother, Bhupendra Kumar, is aligned with Satish, say observers. And that gets touchy as Bhupendra is also on the board of MRL, as the managing director—Virendra looks after production while Bhupendra takes care of the marketing side.

Bhupendra is considered to be the savviest of the brothers, at the head of an independent clutch of high-profile companies like Modi Xerox, Modi Olivetti and Modi Business Machines. And last month, he scored a prestige coup of sorts by announcing a tie-up with Sotheby's of London, and there are reports that he will soon be publishing an edition of London's economic paper *Financial Times* in India.

Backing Satish won't cost Bhupendra anything, or affect his empire. In fact, a Modi Carpets-MRL merger fetches him an ally on the board: Satish. Uncle K.N. Modi has left the board, and that is the slot Satish has in mind at MRL. But Virendra will have none of it, say insiders.

Because if that happens, Virendra stands a pretty good chance of losing control at MRL. The automotive tyres and tubes company—at the end of March this year—had reserves and a surplus of Rs 55.99 crore and its investments are currently valued at Rs 65 crore, over book values of less than half the figure. And of MRL's expansion costs of Rs 160 crore, Rs 130 crore has already been guaranteed by financial institutions. In all, it seems like a pretty comfortable picture.

Satish, on the other hand, will gain a toe-hold in a profitable business when his own doesn't look particularly good. Besides Modi Carpets, he has other problems. A Rs 325-crore fibres project with Courtaulds of the UK has been held up for some years now, as is a hotel project with the Mandarin Oriental hotel group of Hong Kong.

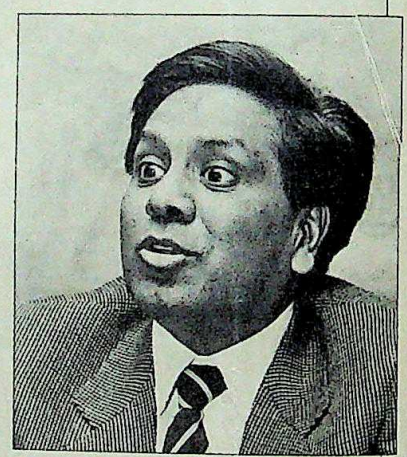
Publicly, Satish maintains a Modi Carpets-oriented picture. He says the company can be turned around if funds are brought in or it is merged with MRL in as little as three years. Virendra says the game is something else altogether. That is one of the problems with the Modis. Nothing is as it seems and the mystery remains.

—VIVIAN FERNANDES

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

"If Modi Rubber can export garments, why can't it sell carpets?"
S.K. MODI

"There is as much synergy between the two companies as there is between a man and a bear."
V.K. MODI



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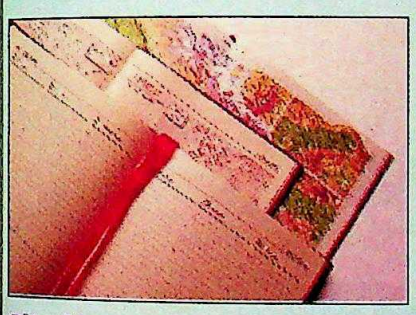

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FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Frantic Wooing

The hardsell begins with liberal promises

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA

IT was a one-day affair but still, quite a road show. On October 18, Finance Minister Manmohan Singh and Minister of State for Commerce P. Chidambaram were in Singapore for a seminar with 350 regional heads of corporations, representatives of multinational corporations and banks, and leading NRIs from South-east Asia. The duo's pitch: invest in India. And the approach: no stalling, no hedging, and open-minded. "For the first time Indians are willing to say 'yes'," says a western banker present. "That's big news."

With good reason. The ministers—who took along a 33-member delegation of top officials and businessmen—made some startling announcements. Like relaxation of import controls. Automatic approval of foreign collaborations in delicensed areas if government response wasn't received in two weeks from the date of application. Plans to allow foreign mutual funds to operate in India. Approval for 100 per cent foreign-owned trading houses to set up shop in India, and opening crude oil refining to foreign companies.

This was backed by a video presentation and a diskette given to each delegate, detailing policy changes, regulations, contact persons, even, a formated application form. The idea: if you want to do business in India, just print out a form and mail it to the Government, no need to make a trip.

The meeting also had a free-wheeling question-answer session. A sampler. Question: How can a minority

PEERLESS

Takeover Bid

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This is the situation with Peerless General Finance and Investment Company Limited, India's largest non-banking financial institution. Parasmal Lodha, a controversial Calcutta real estate developer, who controls 22 per cent of the equity, is the raider. Peerless Chairman and Managing Director P.C. Sen and Joint Managing Director S.K. Roy, who control 68 per cent, want to keep him out. They're still smarting from Lodha's takeover bid four years ago, when he cornered 51 per cent of the shares and a seat on the board. Income tax raids led Lodha to sell off a major chunk of his holdings.

This time Lodha has taken recourse to courts, besides petitioning Central Government officials, say Peerless insiders. But Lodha is firm: "Because I'm a shareholder, I'm trying to safeguard the company's interests." Two of his associates have filed a petition in the Calcutta High Court, alleging irregularities by the management. Among them:

► Issuing 30,000 shares to friends and relatives and guarding themselves behind a resolution that says shares may be issued at the board's discretion. Lodha says the issue of shares needed MRTP approval.

► Granting Rs 97.79 crore of doubtful loans—Rs 50 crore to a firm against already-mortgaged land.

► Fudging balance sheets to show a net profit of Rs 2.78 crore in 1989-90 while it actually lost Rs 28 crore. For 1990-91, profit fell to Rs 1.04 crore.

Meanwhile, a public interest litigation against the Peerless management has been filed in the Supreme Court, allegedly at Lodha's behest. Sen declines to comment, saying the matter is in court. But he counters: "Roy being a simpleton, Lodha expects that one day he'll transfer his shares to Lodha." Roy is the majority shareholder. Sen even says Lodha offered him staggering sums of money to convince Roy to sell out, but when he refused, threatened to kill him. In a complaint to the police two months ago, Sen said Lodha had earlier commissioned underworld don Dawood Ibrahim to carry out the threat. This time he believed there was a plot "by the same person". Lodha was interrogated by the Calcutta Police and then let off.

P.C. SEN

Sen alleges that when he refused to sell out, Lodha threatened to kill him.

PARASMAL LODHA

As of now, the Peerless drama is like a putrid pot-boiler. It isn't likely to get any better. —RUBEN BANERJEE

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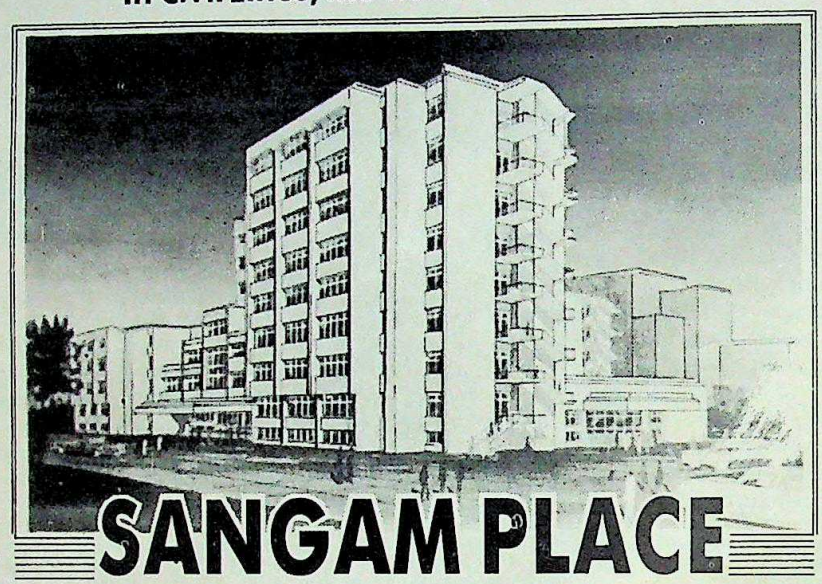

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HALL FOR BANK	1	2,800	26.60	1,00,000/-
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government make reforms stick? Answer: It may be a minority government, but all parties agree there isn't a way out. Question: Won't labour problems affect profitability? Answer: Multinational company profitability in India is comparable to the levels in operation elsewhere, so no problem.

While the meeting isn't expected to immediately attract foreign capital—India brings in $200 million a year in direct foreign investment—the primary focus was to sell an idea. And have top people do the job. "The same team should do presentations in other cities," says Sanjoy Chowdhury, chief economist with US investment firm Merrill Lynch in Singapore. External Affairs Ministry officials say they have more in the pipeline, in Japan, the US, and Europe before year-end.

The ball started rolling when External Affairs Minister Madhavsinh Solanki visited Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in August and told him: "India is open for business." A Singapore Foreign Ministry official later said: "We were pleasantly surprised." A month later, RBI Governor R. Venkitaramanan followed up with a visit and a plea to businessmen which Singh and Chidambaram firmed up.

The visits have started paying off. Singapore's DBS Bank is considering entry into India. AMP, a leading electrical connectors manufacturer, plans to set up a unit in Bangalore. And Singapore Telecom, the state-run but highly efficient utility, would like a software collaboration near Madras. Even if India were able to tap a fraction of the $35-billion in financial reserves estimated to be in Singapore, the visit would have been well worth it. To generate similar interest elsewhere, India's hard-selling, slick-talking team will have to keep the show on the road. —SALIL TRIPATHI in Singapore

PERFUMES

Western Wafts

A bit more of the world available in India. At least as far as fragrances go. Last fortnight, a Guy Laroche counter opened at Benzer, a well-known Bombay store, selling the Drakkar Noir line of men's perfumes.

The price-tag is stiff—Rs 1,150 for cologne, Rs 820 for after shave lotion and Rs 350 for deodorants. While the competition's going rate for after shave lotion is about one-sixteenth Drakkar Noir's, it isn't likely to raise eyebrows. "Perfumes are no longer luxury items," says Varsha Dalal, executive director of Bombay-based Baccarose Perfumes. "People use it before going to work, and the habit will spread as more and more products come into the market." Baccarose exports Rs 60 crore worth of fragrances and toiletries from an export-oriented unit at Kandla in Gujarat, and Guy Laroche is already a customer. The domestic switch, says Dalal, was fairly easy. The company also exports to Lancome, another top-of-the-line French perfume house.

There is no reliable estimate of the size and scope of the perfume market in India—estimates vary from Rs 25 crore to Rs 200 crore a year—but there is an indication of its fast growth. The Park Avenue range (of the JK group) introduced in 1989 chalked up Rs 5 crore in sales last year. Says Assistant Marketing Manager Kiran Nabar: "We have been recording 100 per cent growth every year." Park Avenue plans to launch pre-shave lotion soon for electric razor users.

HEMANT PITHWA

A Drakkar Noir counter at Benzer: brand-name boom

One problem with getting in the market is that perfume sales are made through unbranded, *attar* sales—it's like trying to estimate what the national sweetmeat market is worth. Product launches are usually pegged on touch-and-go market surveys. The recent trend is to target the male audience—men's fragrances, toiletries and fashions are rated by professionals as one of the fastest-growing segments of the urban consumer market.

Another problem is that the industry still depends on importing raw material like perfume oil and alcohol of required grades—the Indian variety is simply not good enough for finer, high-quality fragrances, which are now in greater demand. And an international brand-name certainly helps.

Even established monopoly manufacturers like Goa-based Cosme Matias Menezes group, of the Old Spice range launched in the early 1970s, now see the need for introducing newer brands. Group company Colfax Laboratories, makers of Old Spice, capitalised on its link with its foreign associate, Shulton Incorporated, to launch the Blue Stratos range last year. Chairman P.J. Menezes insists his products have maintained a high quality all along. "Even 20 years ago, it was clear to us that quality had to remain high," says Menezes. "And we still get out products checked for quality with original manufacturers."

The discipline should help. Specially if brands like Drakkar Noir make their way to India.

—M. RAHMAN

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Woollen

Winter musings

Brown.
The colour of
raw earth.
Charcoal
embers and
warm hands.
Autumn leaves
crackling
like fire.
The rust has
left now.
And the chill
wind shivers
over my
shoulder.

Presenting Gold Line.
The finest Merino wool
blended with
premium polyester fibres.
The new line of
winter suitings
from Siyaram's.

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SPICE EXPORTS

Bland Fare

India fights for survival

THE flavour of success appears to be fading away, with the zip going out of Indian spice exports. For one, competition has perked up in the international market, and India finds itself outpriced. For another, domestic demand has gone up—in part because spice barons are funelling more for home consumption to beat the export lag. And now, India finds it difficult to produce enough to get its own back in the international arena.

The irony is that though spices fetch sure money at home, dollars are what the country needs now, but can't get enough of. Exports have consistently fallen. Between 1987-88 and 1990-91, they dropped by Rs 59.42 crore to Rs 238.66 crore, and chances of their plummeting further are high. "The export market is getting crowded with developing countries getting in," says T. Nandakumar, chairman, Spices Board. "India will survive only if we can manage to keep our prices low."

That will be difficult, and even the devaluation won't be of much help. For instance, black pepper, which is the single largest item accounting for almost 47 per cent of spice export earnings last year, came in for a particularly heavy thrashing. India was demanding an average of $2,200 for a quintal in New York, the trading centre for the world's spices, while Malaysia, Indonesia and Brazil were quoting as little as $1,200. And Vietnam, a new producer of pepper, was quoting prices as low as $1,150 for a quintal.

The fall-out was obvious. In 1990-91, India managed to export 31,871 tonnes—10 quintals equal a tonne—of black pepper, a drop of 2,611 tonnes from the previous year, and almost 10,000 tonnes less than in 1987-88. With prices asked remaining more or less constant, a devaluation of the rupee by 20 per cent would still keep Indian pepper at least $500 a quintal more expensive than the nearest international competitor.

Similarly, India is outpriced by Guatemala for cardamom, by Pakistan for chillies, China for ginger and turmeric, and Turkey and China for cuminseed. Ginger and turmeric exports have registered a drop, cardamom is set to go the same way, and the rest—though they have registered an increase in quantity—should go down the drain this year.

While the competition is stepping up its efforts, India is not. Says K.M. Chandrasekhar, former chairman of the Spices Board who is currently doing a study on how to improve world production of spices: "It is not easy for India to elbow into the foreign market." For example, according to Chandrasekhar, farmers in Guatemala are getting into spice cultivation in a big way. In fact, some of them have such huge farms that they usually use a helicopter to oversee their domain.

In India, it is just the opposite. Production is dependent on poor farmers with small holdings who have to pool in their produce to make enough to sell. With a population of nine million, Guatemala produces 8,000 tonnes of cardamom, most of which is exported. India, with its 840 million people, manages only 4,000 tonnes and exports a third of that.

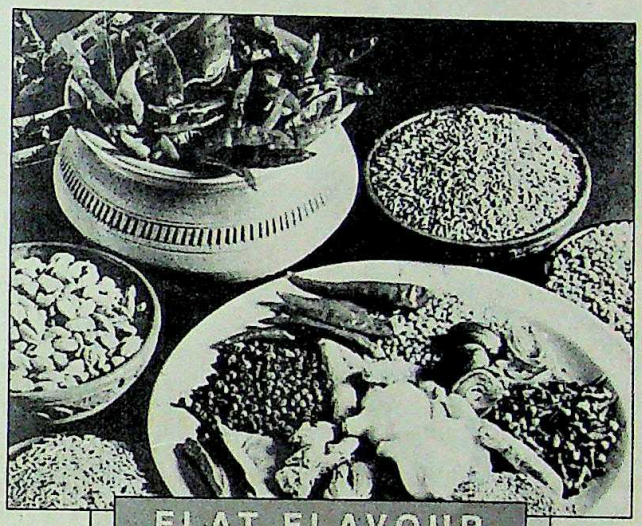
Guatemala's more efficient methods of farming, and the practice of opening up new land for planting—as opposed to what happens in India, where the same plantations have been farmed for decades—have led to better yields. Which, in turn, lead to competitive prices. Consequently, it is able to undercut Indian cardamom by as much as half in the international market, and is hogging the share. For instance, countries in the Middle East and North Africa, which bought Indian cardamom primarily to mix it with coffee to make a Bedouin beverage called *gahwa*, are now looking to Guatemala for succour.

Exactly the same thing is happening with pepper exports from Brazil and Malaysia, which are following the principle of increasing yields through technology and cultivation on fresh land. Besides, in these countries, there is a link between the Government and the growers, which helps any export effort, but in India, it works differently. "It is an incongruous situation," says T. Vidyasagar, chairman, All India Spices Exporters Forum. "There is hardly any coordination between the two."

A way out for India, besides stepping up coordination, would be to get into exporting spices in which competition is still relatively thin: vanilla, thyme, basil and rosemary, for instance, which are essential ingredients in Continental cooking. But even if this effort succeeds, spice exports from India may not get anywhere unless there is a major improvement in processing and packaging. Often, government laboratories abroad reject Indian imports because they find animal excreta in spices. This is because a common practice here is to dry the spices in courtyards, which in the rural areas are usually caked with cowdung.

If Indian spices are to get anywhere, the act will have to get cleaned up. And it has to be for real.

—RAMESH MENON



FLAT FLAVOUR

In 1990-91, Indian spice exports fell to Rs 238.66 crore, a drop of Rs 59.42 crore in three years.

The situation could get worse as:

- **Indian spices are outpriced in the international market.**
- **Countries such as Guatemala, Brazil, Malaysia and Indonesia are promoting spice cultivation. India is not.**
- **Domestic demand is rising, leaving less for export.**

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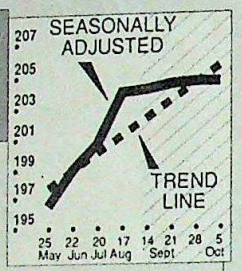
ALL things considered, not too bad a fortnight, besides the promise of foreign aid and pro-liberalisation pronouncements by the finance minister in Bangkok. The latest trade figures show a surplus—marginal, but still good news. And the new tight money policy—at the cost of industrial growth—may actually begin to steady inflation.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.

Wholesale Price Index

1981-82 = 100

Current Trend
10.8% p.a.

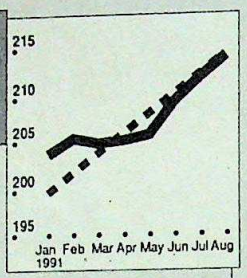


The index registered a slight dip, but the trend rate of growth is still higher than the mid-September levels.

Consumer Price Index

1982 = 100

Current Trend
12.5% p.a.

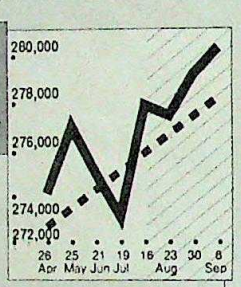


Consumer prices moved up—the trend in wholesale prices has to be sustained for it to percolate here.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

Current Trend
5.7% p.a.

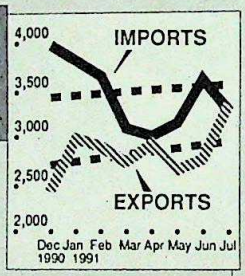


Money supply expanded slightly—but the overall tight money policy may begin to pay off for curbing inflation.

Foreign Trade

Rs Crore

Current Trend
14.2% p.a.
EXPORTS
7.9% p.a.
IMPORTS

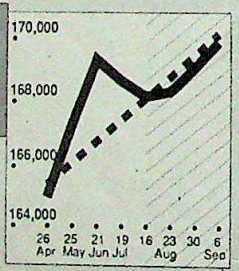


Exports rose significantly in July, while imports fell, resulting in a slight surplus in the trade balance for the month.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crores

Current Trend
7.9% p.a.

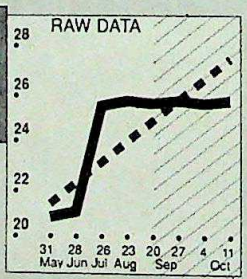


Credit increased marginally—however, industrial recession may get exacerbated as the flow is still low.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Rs per US$

Current Trend
68.9% p.a.

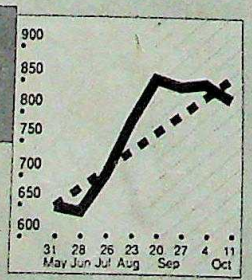


The rupee fell after a slight appreciation against the dollar—exports should benefit, but not if inflation isn't curbed.

Share Price Index

1984-85 = 100

Current Trend
70.10% p.a.

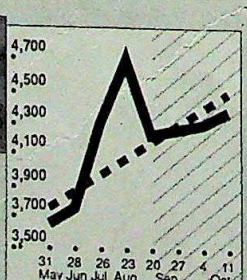


Share prices dipped reacting to the higher interest rate policy announced by the Government.

Closing Gold Prices

Rs per 10 gms

Current Trend
49.4% p.a.



Gold prices continued to rise, on two counts—a push for inflation hedging, and demand far outstripping supply.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of September 1991

	% Growth
Chillies	9.78
Paper	6.51
Turmeric	5.22
Machine Tools	4.81
Buses	4.57
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	3.95
Silk Raw	3.38
Coffee	3.21
Oranges	2.47
Groundnut Seeds	2.32
Copra	1.67
Arhar	1.63
Ragi	1.59
Cables & Wires	1.44
Radio & T.V.	1.27
Rubber	1.20
Onions	1.15
Cashew-Nut	1.00
Coconut Oil	0.96
Electricity	0.78
Bajra	0.68
Ghee	0.65
Jowar	0.63
Diesel Oil	0.59
Moong	0.48
Tobacco Raw	0.33
Bulk Products	0.31
Rice	0.27
Dairy Products	0.27
Gingelly Oil	0.19
Sugar	0.19
Gingelly Seed	0.13
Meat	0.04
Masoor	0.04
Bars & Rods	0.00
Rails	0.00
Pipes & Tubes	0.00
Aluminium	0.00
Soda Ash	0.00
Copper & Alloys	0.00
Pesticides & Insecticides	0.00
Skelp	0.00
Plates & Sheets	0.00
Nitrogenous Fertilisers	0.00
Synthetic Fibres	0.00
Dyeing Materials	0.00
Tyres	0.00

Of the 134 series considered, 102 of them with a total weight of 52.558 had a non-negative rate of growth and 32 of them with a total weight of 32.294 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1991	1990
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, August	15200	13900
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, August	793.1	759.0
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, August	4202	3650
Fertiliser		
Thousand Tonnes, August	874.1	833.9
Electricity		
Million kWh, August	23399	21626

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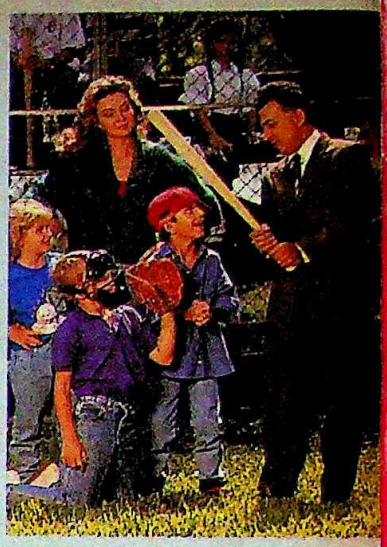

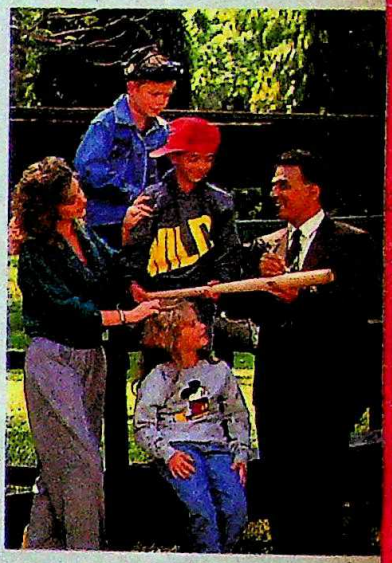

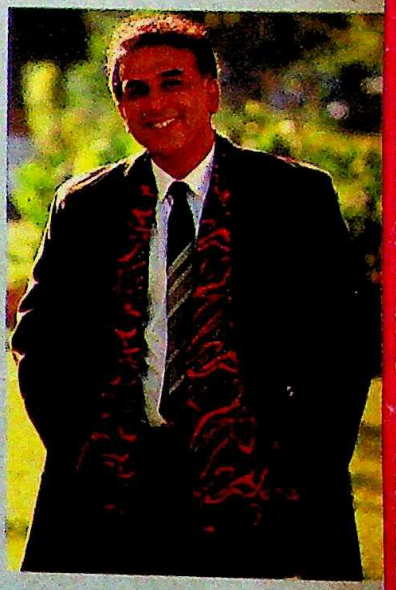

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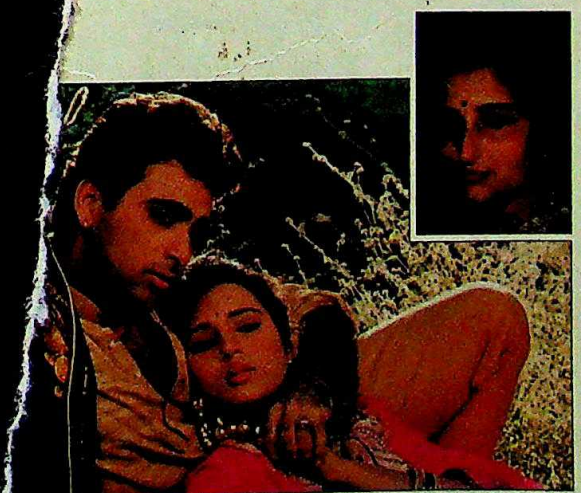
no saying how far you might look for your kind of art. ...y is ...hat it plans ...out the second chann... that much-touted El Dorado Union Minister Ajit Panja kept promising. The Vardhan Committee Report on the privatisation of television has listed several options for the national alternative channel. One plan is to parcel out different regions of the country like Trichy, Varanasi or Rajamundry to various companies. Another is to extend the second channel in the four metropolitan cities to other areas with low-powered transmitters. And if all else fails, there's always time-sharing. In other words, back to square one, after much passion and paper spent.

◆ *Chitrahaar* has now become home ground for the dulcet-voiced Anuradha Paudwal and her impresario-nouveau millionaire Gulshan Kumar of T-Series cassette fame. The programme usually begins with the podgy singer. And, increasingly, it's not the song alone but the singer and the producer as well. Either playing the singer in the film, *Saathi*. Or her cut-out face floating over young lovers. Or leading a religious procession. As for Mr T-Series himself, he usually smuggles himself in for all the religious numbers—eyes closed in spiritual ecstasy while the temple bells clang. It is perhaps time for Mr Kumar to cast himself in his own production.

—MADHU JAIN

...rahim: caught on screen

Winner of the Silver Panda: canned at home



Salil, Veverly in *Lal Dupatta Malmal Ka*; (inset) Paudwal

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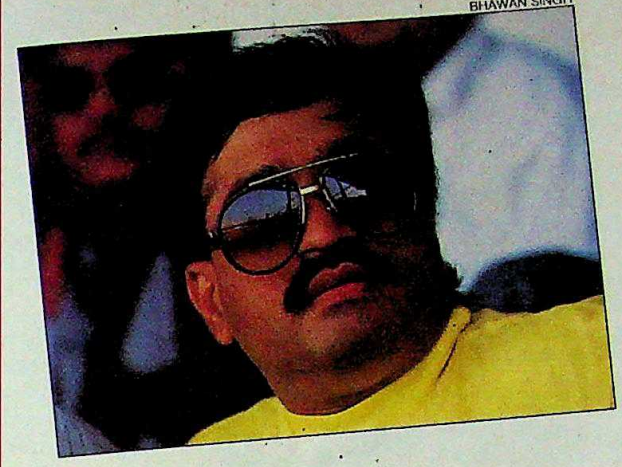
◆ It'll take a long time to forget those puzzled eyes, big with questions about their hellish lives. The heart-rending documentary *The Girl Child: The Prisoner of Gender* never made it to DD. But it did to China and to the Silver Panda award. Ranjini Majumdar and Shikha Jhingan's film made for PTI-TV on the maltreatment of girl children in India won the second prize at the international television festival in Chengdu, over the American film *Home Street Home* about the homeless in the land of plenty. A film on the herdsmen of Northern Tibet, *A Family in Northern Tibet* got the Golden Panda. The Indian film must have touched a chord in China because female infanticide is not unknown there, even though it is not served up in their films.

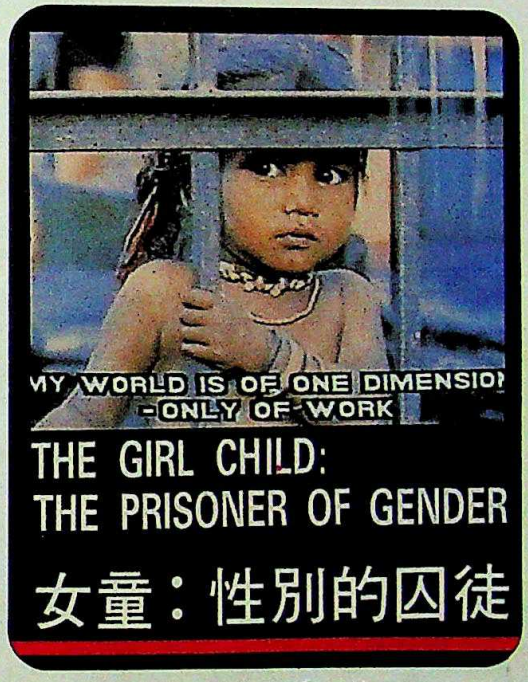
◆ Uneasy lies the head which wears the director-general's crown. First it was Shiv Sharma who kept having the rug pulled from underneath. Now it's his successor the acting director-general Shashi K. Kapoor who incurred the wrath of Shastri Bhavan when he refused to reinstate M.P. Rawat as Controller of Current Affairs. Rawat, who has friends in high places, had been bundled off to the outer Mongolia of Planning and Policy. Kapoor's now been told that he could always go to AIR—the Government selection panel had cleared him for director-general AIR, while Sharma's future was uncertain. The suspense continues.

◆ The playing fields of Sharjah had the nation's eyes glued to them. And blood pressures went soaring at India's fate at the hustings. But the fields had competition: even for the DD men's attention. The camera rested on the shiny gold-shirted elusive smuggler don Dawood Ibrahim sitting in a VIP box surrounded by friends. The cameras lingered on him at least five times during the penultimate India-Pakistan match. The highlights later served him up again. DD went where the Indian sleuths fear to tread.

BHAWAN SINGH



▲ Dawood Ibrahim: caught on screen



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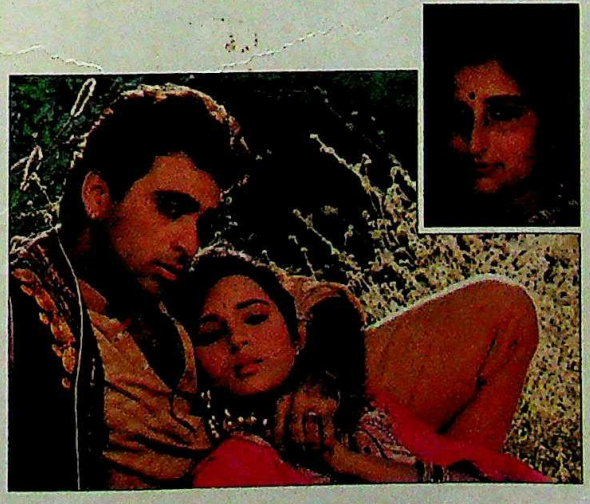

▲ Salil, Veverly in *Lal Dupatta Malmal Ka*; (inset) Paudwal

◆ Finally, the I&B Ministry has put down on paper what it plans to do about the second channel. that much-touted El Dorado Union Minister Ajit Panja kept promising. The Vardhan Committee Report on the privatisation of television has listed several options for the national alternative channel. One plan is to parcel out different regions of the country like Trichy, Varanasi or Rajamundry to various companies. Another is to extend the second channel in the four metropolitan cities to other areas with low-powered transmitters. And if all else fails, there's always time-sharing. In other words, back to square one, after much passion and paper spent.

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—MADHU JAIN

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CRICKET

A Sharjah Diary

India had looked set to win the Wills Trophy from the word go, but couldn't beat the pressure when it mattered.

By RAJ CHENGAPPA in Sharjah
Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH

HALF past two is when the strangest things happen at the Sharjah cricket stadium. The afternoon heat leaves a dull haze over the field. The humidity rises and you begin to perspire easily. A gentle breeze blows towards the pavilion end and brings in its wake tiny, whirling sandstorms. Any bowler coming in with the wind suddenly finds he is able to make the ball wobble and dip on what till then was a harmless wicket.

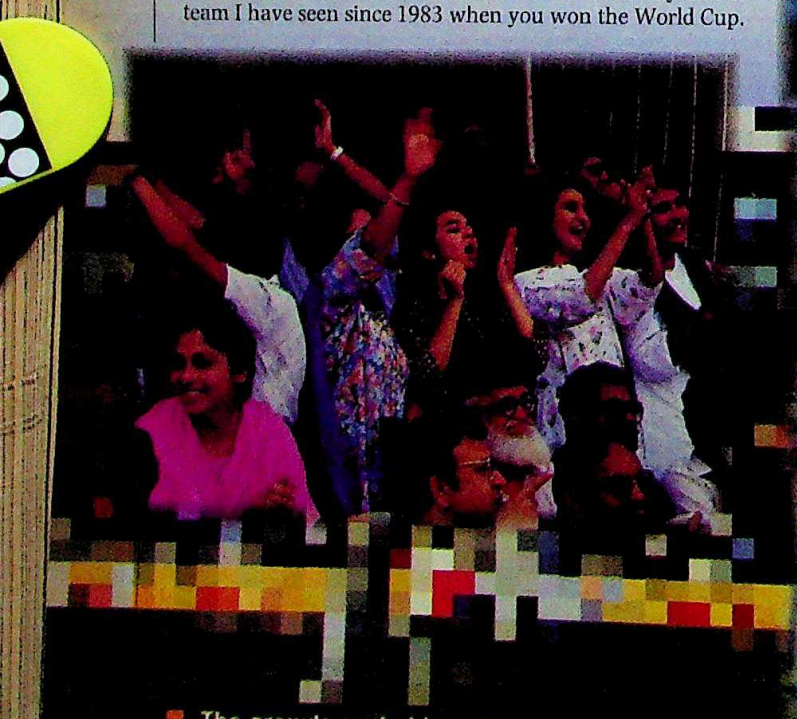
On that Friday afternoon, it converted Aaquib Javed, till then the least menacing of the Pakistani pace battery, into a lethal weapon. In the space of three historic deliveries, he destroyed what is perhaps the best batting line-up in the world.

FLATTERING TO DECEIVE: Before the finals, with three convincing wins to their credit and an avoidable defeat, the Indians had not looked so good for a long time. On the day before the finals, after a hard workout at the nets, Pakistan captain Imran Khan told me inside the bus that was taking his team back to the hotel: "It's the best one-day Indian team I have seen since 1983 when you won the World Cup. You have excellent batsmen with contrasting styles and it's a formidable line-up."

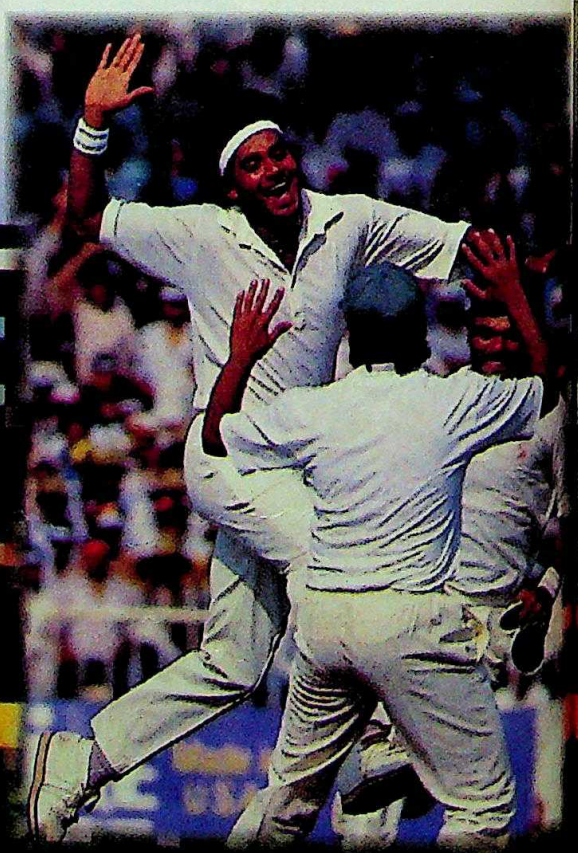
Next to us sat Wasim Akram, the graceful left-arm pace bowler, singing an old Hindi film song. Waqar Younis, who studied in Sharjah before joining the Pakistan team, listened quietly. And Javed sat in front lost in his own thoughts.

The Pakistan team had in fact initially looked like a ragged and rusty outfit as it lost its first two matches and then narrowly squeaked past the West Indies in the third. So much so that Imran had remarked: "Our target is really the World Cup. There are a lot of faults we need to work out. Especially our batting, which seems suspect." But it proved otherwise.

CRACKING UNDER PRESSURE: So why did India lose what essentially should have been its trophy? Was it because against Pakistan, India has a psychological barrier



■ The crowds rooted largely for Pakistan. And despite the tournament being held in Sharjah, Indian players complained that they may as well have been in Karachi or Islamabad.



■ Helped by a desert breeze, fast bowler Aaqui Javed turned lethal and destroyed India's mighty batting line-up with a historic hat trick.

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that it still can't overcome? Remember, till last fortnight it hadn't defeated Pakistan in a one-day match at Sharjah since 1985. Part of the problem was that the team seemed to peak too early. And was never really put under pressure till the finals. The lack of experience in handling crises seemed to show up.

Union Minister Madhavrao Scindia, who is also the Indian Cricket Board chief, watched the Indian team crack up in the finals with increasing dismay. Scindia had flown in the previous day to attend an international cricket council meeting and sat in the players' gallery looking dapper in a navy blue blazer. During lunch he observed: "Under pressure, we seem to wilt and come apart in all departments of the game."

BLOW HOT, BLOW COLD: Skipper Mohammed Azharuddin's demeanour was a good barometer of the Indian performance. When the team was on a winning streak, Azhar was amiable and chatty. When the team lost the first time against Pakistan, Azhar looked sullen and refused to speak to the press. In the finals, he seemed dispirited as the Indian fielding constantly bungled. And by evening as the batting collapsed, he looked grim.

It wasn't till later in the night, dressed in black (only by coincidence), that he regained his composure and was willing to discuss what happened. He was unusually blunt: "We fielded badly, didn't bat or bowl well. And we also had some bad decisions against us." The Indian skipper was particularly sore that he was given out leg before when according to him his bat had touched the ball before it struck his pads. "Decisions like these can cost any team the match," he said.

THE GREEN WAVE: Earlier, as India crumbled to 143 for 8, in a special enclosure near the VIP gallery, Naren Tamhane, chief of the selection committee, cast a baleful eye at the proceedings below. He looked at the roaring crowds in the stands and said in disgust: "The reaction is so different here and it's put tremendous pressure on our team. We don't know whether it's cricket or something else."

True, the Sharjah crowd is a green wave for Pakistan. And Allah's name is frequently used to cheer the team on. Among the more popular slogans: "*Pakistan ka matlab kya, la ilahilallah, Hindustan ka matlab kya, bhad mein jaye humko kya.*" (What does Pakistan stand for: there is one God that is Allah. And India? It can go to hell for all we care.)

During the finals, especially when India was batting, the din of support for Pakistan was deafening. Navjot Sidhu told me he could hardly concentrate while batting. And Kapil complained: "We may as well be playing in Pakistan." But it's not the first time—nor the last—that the Indian team has had to face hostile crowds and the players will have to learn to cope.

NO THINK TANKS: The real problem seemed to be a lack of cohesive gameplan in crucial matches. Like going for the kill in the second match against Pakistan instead of taking it easy. When a morning mist delayed play, India should have calculated that they would have to face the Pakistani pacers in fading light. And could have had the number of overs reduced before the game began. The result was ridiculous. The last few overs were played when the street lights were on. The digital scoreboard had never looked so bright. And with Younis and Akram bowling full pace, it was difficult to spot the ball. India lost and Azhar was livid.

The Pakistani team's tail was up and they had wrested the psychological advantage. As Gordon Greenidge, the West Indian batsman who was one of the beneficiaries of the

■ Imran Khan shone with the bat instead of the ball. Tendulkar was explosive but immature and seemed to play too much to the gallery.

■ Though Azharuddin emerged as a "captain of consensus", he needs to develop cricket cunning as well as learn to be assertive.

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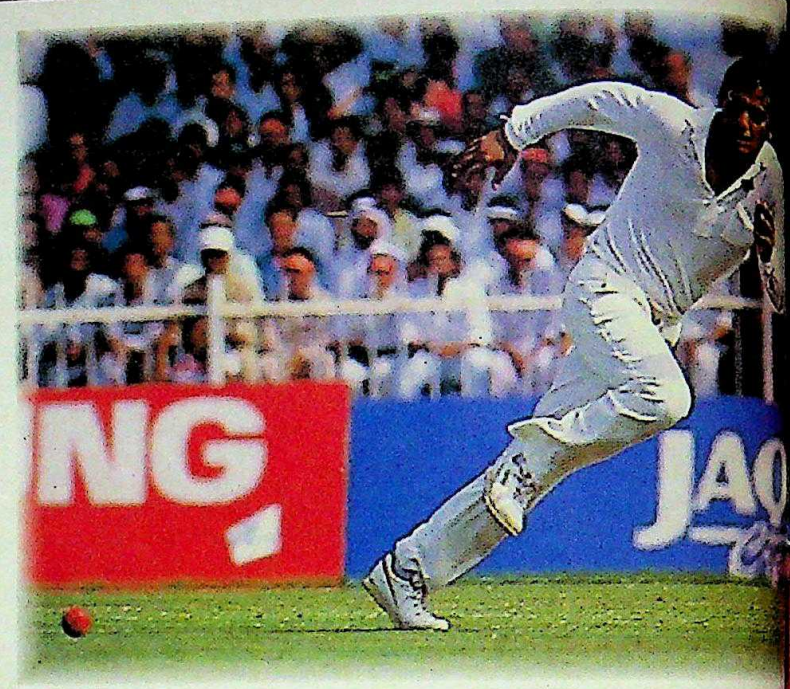
tournament, observed: "That match was really the finals. You gave Pakistan the taste of victory. And there was no stopping them after that."

LACK OF CUNNING: It's not as if Azharuddin's captaincy lacked competence. Tiger Pataudi thinks Azharuddin is a "captain of consensus". Says he: "He is not flamboyant but unobtrusive, respected and liked. And he carries the team by example, especially where his fielding is concerned." Imran Khan concurs as he remarks: "His style is mild but assertive. He underplays everything but does a great job."

Azhar, however, seems to lack what Imran has: a cunning that has carried his team to glory. Imran earlier led by example. Now he is clearly showing his age, but still is in supreme command of his team, keeping all his players under a tight leash and even lashing out at selectors for making wrong decisions. In contrast, Azhar is too much of a gentleman. As Ashok Mankad, the Indian team manager, says: "Azhar needs to develop in himself what is called cricket's connivance."



TOO MANY SHEHNAI PLAYERS: When India played, team manager Mankad sat in the players' gallery and was always seen immersed in a tiny book of religious verses. In the first three matches, his prayers seemed to have been answered. But after that both God and the team seemed to have failed him.

Before leaving for Sharjah, Mankad told me in Delhi: "The team has a rhythm. But what it needs is to build it up into an orchestra." As the tournament progressed, some harmon

It's Time You Felt The PACE

PACE

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(Clockwise from above) Manjrekar emerged as the Man of the Series in the one-day tournament. Mankad and Scindia watched India collapse. Only Azhar's fielding was good.

did emerge but the problem was that there were too many shehnai players and more left thumbs.

Ravi Shastri and Kapil Dev still see themselves as potential captains for the forthcoming Test and one-day series in Australia. Though unspoken, there always exists an undercurrent of tension in their relationships with Azhar. Shastri, for instance, insisted on coming in to bowl with the breeze assisting him. Although Venkatapathi Raju, the other spinner, was more effective whenever he bowled from that end.

Meanwhile, the Board will have to sort out the business of appointing team managers which is currently treated more like doling out a favour. For instance, Mankad's stint ends now that the one-day series against Pakistan is cancelled. And Abbas Ali Baig takes over for the Australian tour. Ideally, they should have appointed a manager for the entire season. Deryck Murray, for instance, is in charge of the West Indian team right through to the World Cup.

THE COOLEST ONE: What's striking about Sanjay Manjrekar is his remarkable composure both on and off the field. He's not an easy mixer and prefers to keep his company. Every morning before the beginning of the game, Manjrekar would sit in the players' gallery quietly watching the opposition teams practise at the nets, gauging their game.

Before Sharjah, he had a reputation of having too straight a bat and his technique was an inhibition to the kind of run-getting needed for the one-day game. But Manjrekar successfully adapted his batting to the demands of the game. Lifting his shots, he became the team's most prolific scorer. Says he: "I don't believe in going berserk hitting the ball. In one-day cricket you have to bat to a plan."

With his batting performance and his equanimity, he has

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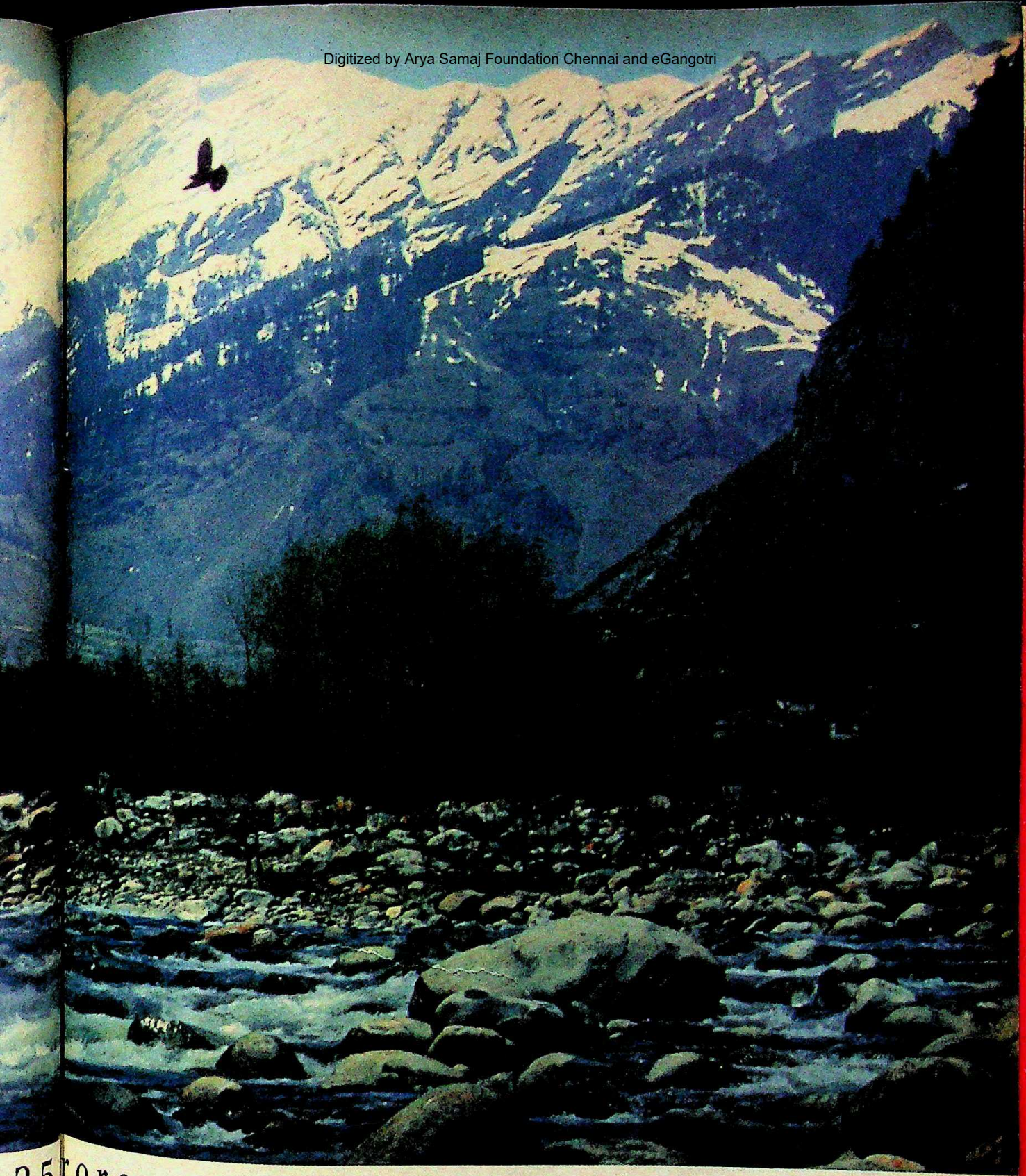

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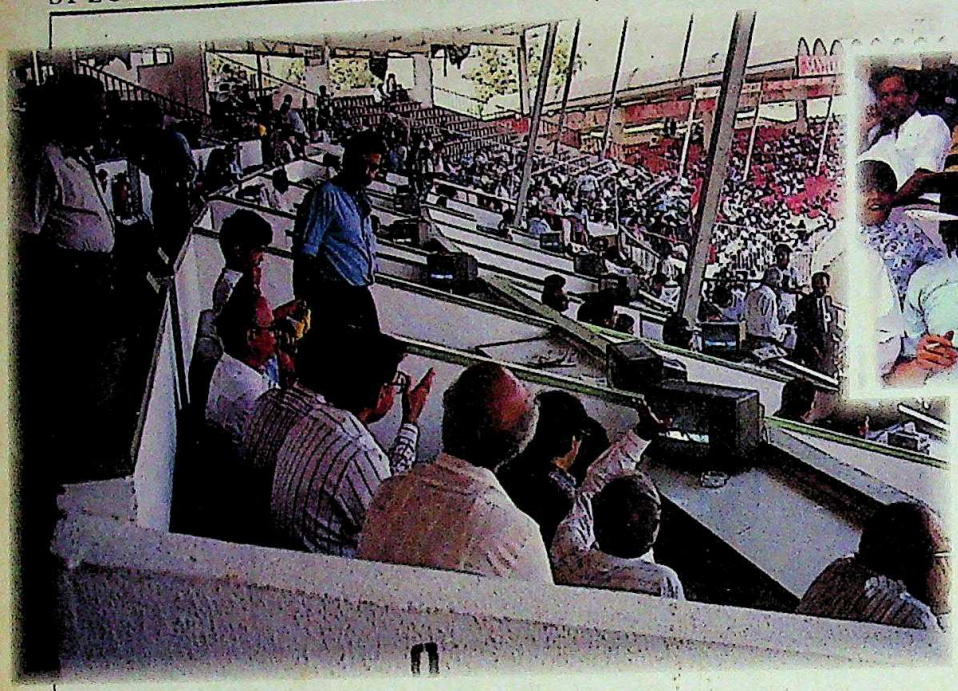

■ **Cricket is a carnival in Sharjah but an expensive one. A permanent box in the VIP enclosure costs over Rs 7 lakh.**

the potential of becoming a captain. The man seems to have even calculated for that. Says he: "You have got to climb one step at a time. Because if you climb too fast, you might end up with a pulled muscle." And a rare smile breaks across his chubby cheeks.

ROCK AND RUNS: The man who sets the crowd alight everytime he steps into the field in his batting gear is Sachin Tendulkar. He may love to listen to gentle rock music at home. But at the crease, he plays to a different beat: more like heavy metal.

He did show his inexperience by needlessly attempting another six to get his 50 against Pakistan. The cherubic Tendulkar, 18, was terribly upset with that shot and said: "I have got to learn to be patient." Meanwhile, the team discovered he was a useful medium pace bowler too.

Tendulkar's room-mate was the gritty new-find Vinod Kambli. Both are also school-mates in Bombay. Kambli was always ragged by the crowd as being a West Indian because of his dark looks. But he has a sense of humour to match. He told a sports photographer with a mischievous glee: "You better take me against a white background, otherwise you can't see my face." The Bombay brigade—as the two teenagers and Manjrekar are known—is likely to be the mainstay of India's middle-order for many years to come.

INDIA GATE: For the team to have a serious shot at the World Cup, it must drastically improve its fielding and running between wickets, and make its bowling more accurate. While Azharuddin is among the world's best fielders, his team-mates are not a patch on him. Manoj Prabhakar came to be known as 'India Gate' after the way he allowed a boundary to slip through his legs during the finals. Raju and Kambli are constantly fumbling with their throws. And between Shastri and Raman, it's difficult to decide who moves more lethargically. As Kapil points out: "Unless fielding is tops, no bowling side looks good."

India's batting line-up, despite a collapse in the finals, is still rated the best in the world. But its batsmen show poor running between the wickets and few seem interested in converting the ones into twos. Ravi Shastri and Navjot Sidhu seemed intent on running each other out.

HIGH STAKES: The stadium in Sharjah rises out of the desert sands like a giant concrete bowl. The city itself is two fly-overs away from Dubai. But, unlike Dubai, does not permit liquor or discotheques.

Ten years after it all began, cricket in Sharjah is a high stakes venture. Apart from the prize money of $ 75,000, this year saw a Toyota Cressida being given to the master blaster, the person who hits the highest number of sixes. Imran Khan with four sixes drove the Toyota away while Sachin Tendulkar was $ 3,000 (Rs 71,000) greener for getting the fastest 50—off 40 balls. Man of the Series Sanjay Manjrekar stroked his way to $ 3,500 (Rs 90,000). Looking at the prize money, Sir Garfield Sobers joked: "We got only cycle expense. Today, I don't mind padding up again."

DESERT PARTY: For the spectators too, money talks. At the VIP gallery, each enclosure can be bought for one lakh dirhams (Rs 7 lakh) and comes with a seating for six, a fridge, television and telephone. Bombay underworld don Dawood Ibrahim and his Pakistani counterpart Aslam Bhatti have their boxes next to each other. During matches their runners are constantly taking bets.

Abdulrahman Bukhatir, the brain behind the Sharjah Cup, now plans to take cricket to Abu Dhabi and Dubai. He also wants to establish a Test centre. Meanwhile, Bukhatir takes personal interest in deciding seating arrangements for his celebrity guest list of film stars and famous cricketers.

Almost every evening he would throw a lavish party. One such at the beautiful Holiday International beside a creek, had a badly choreographed fashion show with amateur models prancing around inelegantly. Richie Richardson, the West Indies captain, strolled into the bar, asked for whisky, dunked it down in one gulp and walked back. "Only one drink for me tonight," he said. The highlight of the evening was a performance by a British rock singer called Amuzulu. It was like listening to a morning alarm—and the lawns emptied out quickly.

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SANTINIKETAN

An Idyll Invaded

Influx of city dwellers in Tagore's university town

GURUDEV'S dream is slowly turning into a nightmare. Santiniketan, the tranquil university town set up by Rabindranath Tagore, is under invasion from Calcutta city slickers. Executives, film makers and businessmen, tired of the urban hustle-bustle, are on a land-buying spree in the peaceful seat of the Visva Bharati, transforming Tagore's heritage into a commercial concrete jungle.

The reasons for the influx are obvious. For some, it is a quiet and upmarket weekend getaway from Calcutta's smoke and smog. For others, it is an ideal place to retire to. Says film critic Chidananda Dasgupta, 67, who has built his retirement home in Santiniketan's Andrews Palli area: "It was a conscious decision to settle down in this island which has an undiluted concentration of the intelligentsia."

But now, it is the boxwallahs who are following suit. When Pritiranjan Roy, 61, retired as the director of Indian Oxygen Limited last year, he swapped the frenetic city life for the peace and quiet of Santiniketan. Says Roy: "I've spent the last 20 years in the modern environs of Alipore. But I always wanted to get away from it all."

But there's a price to pay for getting away from it all. With the demand for land shooting up, real estate sharks are gobbling up the farmland on the fringes of Santiniketan. For the urban middle class, though, owning a home in the township works out much cheaper than in Calcutta. For instance, a *cottah* (60 *cottahs* make an acre) of land in this university town costs between Rs 6,000 and Rs 25,000. While a *cottah* on the outskirts of Calcutta costs between Rs 30,000 and Rs 40,000.

As a result, Santiniketan's azure skyline has changed dramatically. As has the character of the bastion of Bengali intelligentsia. For the corporate bigwigs have brought with them the city culture which they wanted to leave behind. Eyesores like air-conditioners and Marutis zipping around the tree-lined streets of Purbapalli and Abanpalli have become a common sight. The Roys, for example, lugged along an air-conditioner, a colour TV, a VCR and a high-wattage sound system when they moved from the city. They even packed a Shriram Honda generator—to beat the frequent power cuts, of course.

The city's residents are not amused. Says Rabindra Sangeet doyen and Tagore disciple, Santideb Ghosh, 82: "The rich may come here on holidays and build their houses. But they come with a different attitude. It isn't possible for them to relate to the classical Santiniketan way of life." And the chorus of complaints is becoming louder. Says chartered accountant-novelist Buddhadev Guha, who built his house here in 1988, wryly: "Now in Santiniketan, you meet the whole of Calcutta. The city follows you, the Calcutta Club follows you."

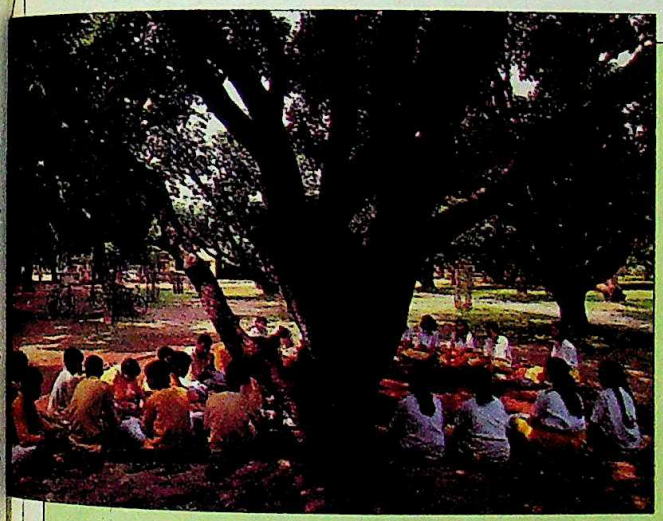
Alarmingly, so do the hoteliers. Ramanuj Aditya, 59, plans to open the first swanky hotel here in January next year. The Rs 1.9-crore hotel with 50 air-conditioned rooms is facing flak from locals. In fact, they're now waging a battle to stop the hotel from getting a bar licence.

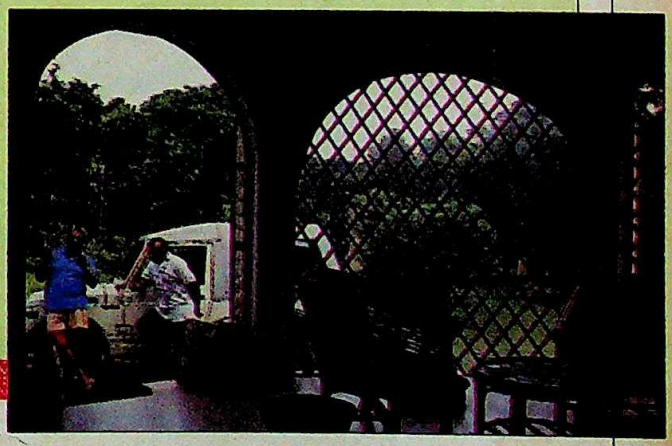
But if they lose their battle, Tagore's ideals may soon become only history.

—SOUTIK BISWAS in Santiniketan

Photographs by SAIBAL DAS

(Clockwise from below) Students under a tree; a construction site; inside of a week-end home: changing face





The city culture in the homes of corporate bigwigs, and the proposal to build a five-star hotel militates against Tagore's ideals.

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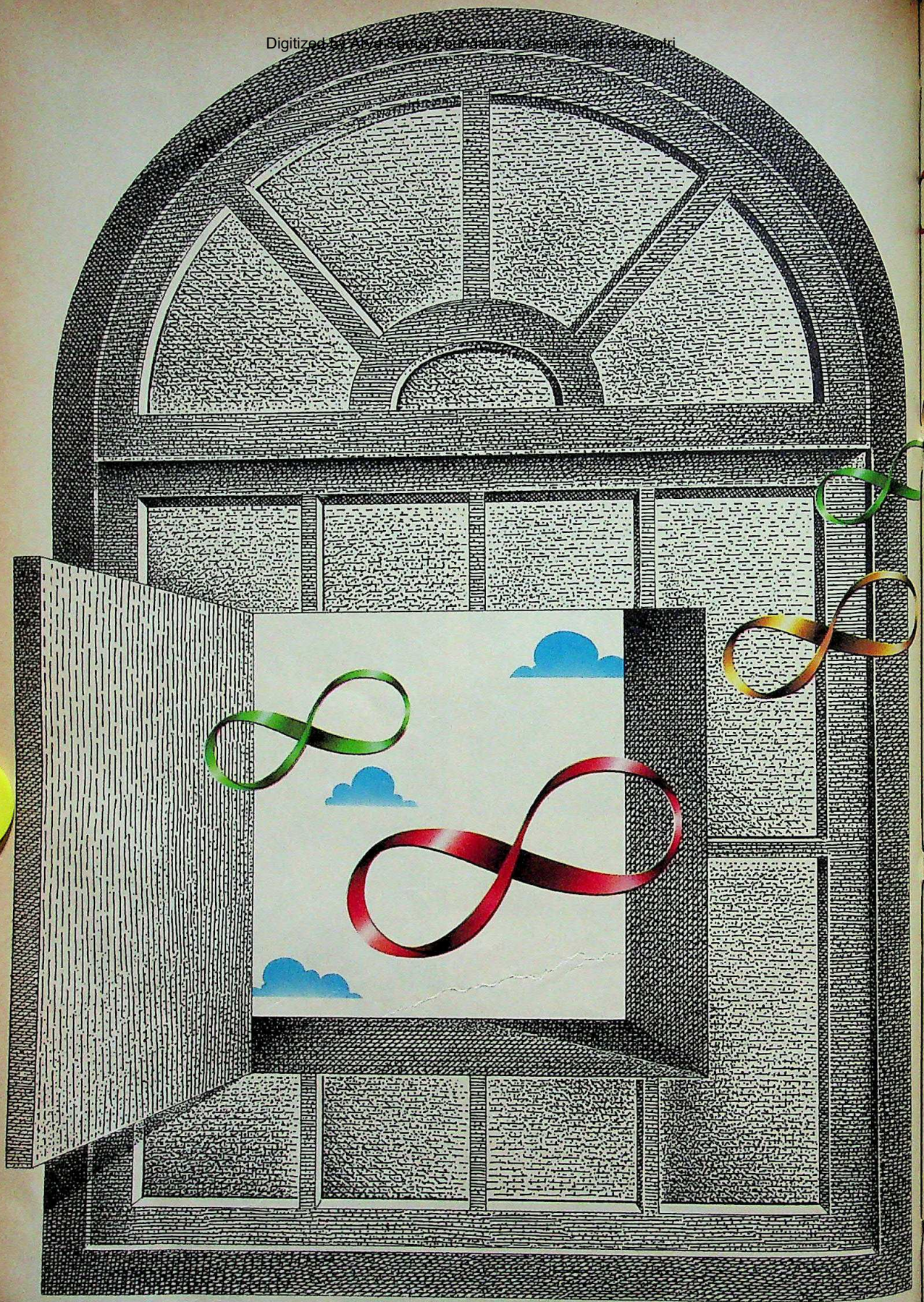

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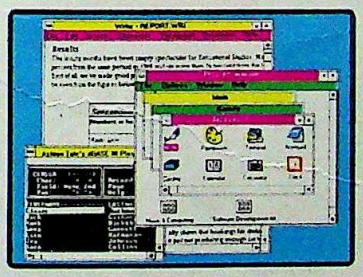

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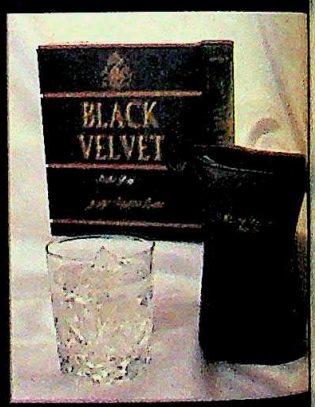

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DALAPATHI

Superstar Spectacle

The casting of the two southern superstars in Mani Ratnam's multi-crore extravaganza promises to be an electrifying experience.

Rajnikant (left) with Mammooty

ON celluloid, a mere toss of his head or a flick of his wrist is enough to drive women delirious with delight. But if Tamil superstar Rajnikant's swagger sends hearts racing, the adrenaline pumps as frenetically when the metallic-voiced Malayalam actor Mammooty makes his first appearance on screen.

Yet, for film-crazy southerners, the truly electrifying experience has only just begun. The two southern superstars are now starring together for the first time on the silver screen in the Tamil film *Dalapathi* (The Commander). The casting coup is just the beginning of the story. Sitting in the director's chair is movie moghul Mani Ratnam, India's answer to Steven Spielberg. And the background music is scored by music wizard Illayaraja. Moreover, with a whopping budget of Rs 3 crore, *Dalapathi* is the most expensive film ever made in the south.

The big-budget extravaganza will certainly set the cash registers ringing. That's why the dream merchants are pulling out all the stops for the pre-release publicity blitz. And Tamil Nadu is gripped by *Dalapathi* mania—in many ways similar to Batmania. The market is flooded with *Dalapathi* paraphernalia—T-shirts, of which one lakh have already been snapped up, bags, diaries, calendars, pens and stickers. Rajnikant's hair-style in the film is the latest craze in the south.

The story itself is classic kitsch. Slum dweller Surya, played by cult hero Rajnikant, clashes with slum lord Deva, played by Mammooty, only to join hands with him in the fight for justice. Enter the collector who turns out to be Surya's foster-brother. Then there's the proverbial love triangle as Surya falls in love with a woman who eventually marries the collector. For some poetic justice, Deva is bumped off by a new don in town. Loosely based on the Mahabharat, Rajni plays Karna to Mammooty's Duryodhana. Says Mammooty about his co-star: "Apart from being a superstar, he is a very nice person to work with."

If the casting is epic, so are the rates paid to the stars. Apparently, Rajnikant was paid a stupendous Rs 60-lakh for *Dalapathi*. Producer G. Venkateswaran denies it. Mammooty's share in comparison seems like peanuts: a mere Rs 10 lakh. Illayaraja is expected to net up to Rs 30 lakh. Bollywood baddie Amrish Puri

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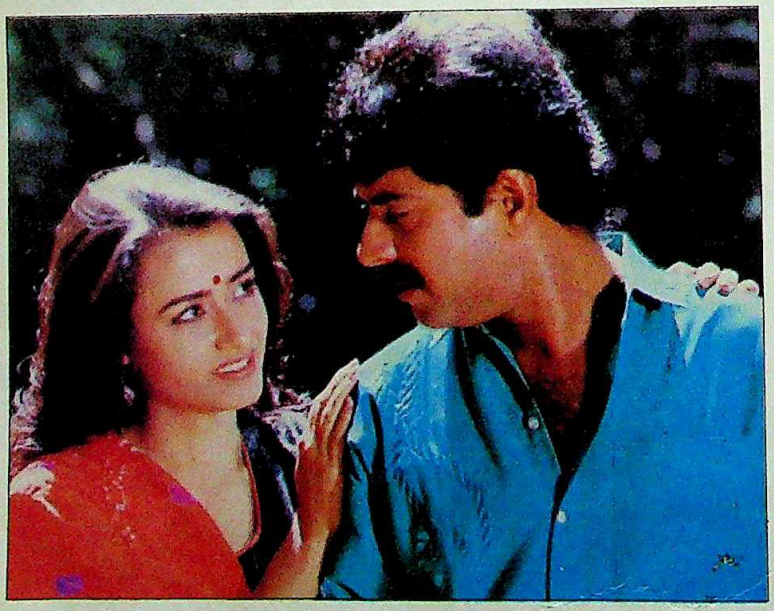
While for Rajnikant acting is only a profession, for Mammooty it is an obsession.



Rajnikant with Juhi Chawla (top); and Mammooty with Amala

was paid Rs 5 lakh for just five days of shooting. And the picturisation of a single dream sequence—which included 1,000 horses—cost an astronomical Rs 21 lakh.

Dalapathi is clearly cashing in on the Rajni rage. For Rajnikant has carried many a block-buster on his broad shoulders so far. One of the highest paid actors—he charges Rs 40 lakh per film—he is part of Tamil folklore today. From his debut in *Apoorva Ragangal* (Strange Tunes) to smash hits like *Moondru Mudichu* (Three Knots), Rajnikant's climb up the ladder of superstardom has been meteoric. The bus-conductor-turned-actor has built himself a macho tough-guy image that has the front-benchers rooting for him. And mannerisms that have spawned a string of Rajnikant clones. Admits he: "I'm not an actor. I've always known that I had to do something else to attract my audience. So I developed these mannerisms."

And it sure has worked. For Rajni mania has spread like a prairie fire. The Rajnikant Fans and Welfare Association with a membership of over 5 lakh and 10,000 branches is the largest fan club among those of Tamil stars. A Rajni release is always preceded by a lot of hype and hoopla: cut-outs, buntings, flowers, special lights, and sweets for the audience. His mesmeric hold, which almost matches MGR mania, is evident from the young men with Rajni tattooed on their arms and chests, the Rajni caps and Rajni T-shirts.

But reel life's angry young man is surprisingly mellow in real life. Says the star: "All this money, fame and power is momentary. Acting is only my profession, spiritualism is my life." The megastar who's been cranking out megahits a dime a dozen is now doing a maximum of three to four films a year. *Dalapathi* is a turning point for him. As he says: "I was looking for different roles, action-oriented, but different. *Dalapathi* is such a role." The 41-year-old actor's eventual plans? "I might retire to the Himalayas."

For Mohammed Kutty, 39, better known as Mammooty, the Himalayas to be scaled are all within the profession. And he has touched their pinnacles time and again. A versatile actor, he has had hosannas heaped on him since his debut in *Vilkanulla Swapnaganal* (Dreams for Sale). Playing a bewildering array of roles—from that of a circus dwarf in *Mela* to a detective in *Oru CBI Diary Kurrippu*—Mammooty is now ready for the biggest role of his career. Says he: "My talent hasn't been fully exploited so far."

Cine buffs obviously believe otherwise. Mammooty won the national award for his role as a legendary hero in *Oru Vadakan Veera Katha* (A Tale of a Legend) and Adoor Gopalakrishnan's *Mathilukal* (Walls) in 1989. Yet he remains unimpressed. "I'm still looking for my dream role."

While for Rajnikant acting is a profession, for Mammooty it is an obsession. For the law graduate-turned-actor this may be just another feather in his celluloid cap. As it will be for Rajnikant. For their fans, of course, *Dalapathi* will just be the ultimate extravaganza.

—KAVITHA SHETTY with ANAND VISWANATHAN and KALYAN KUMAR

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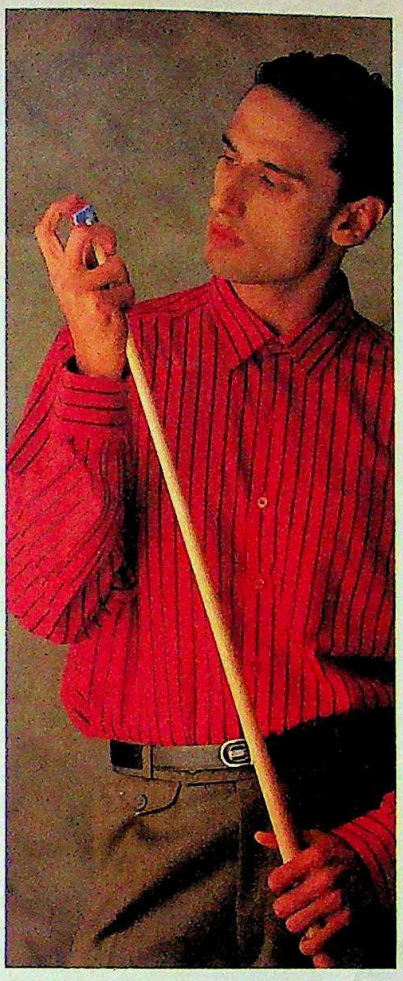

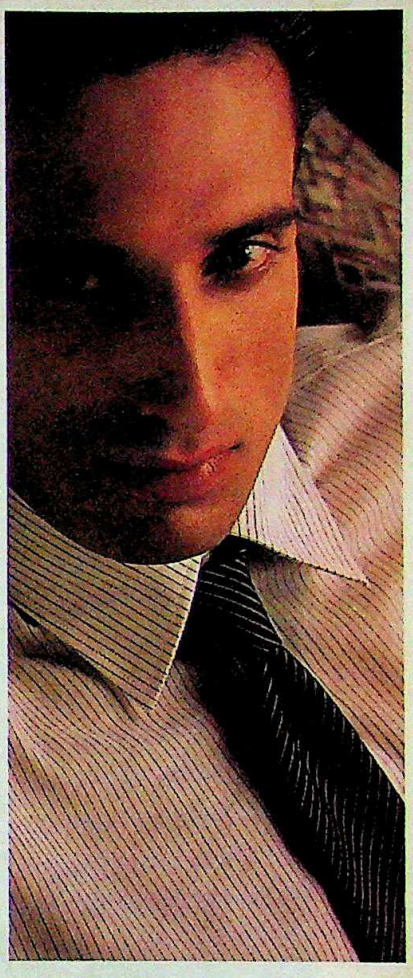

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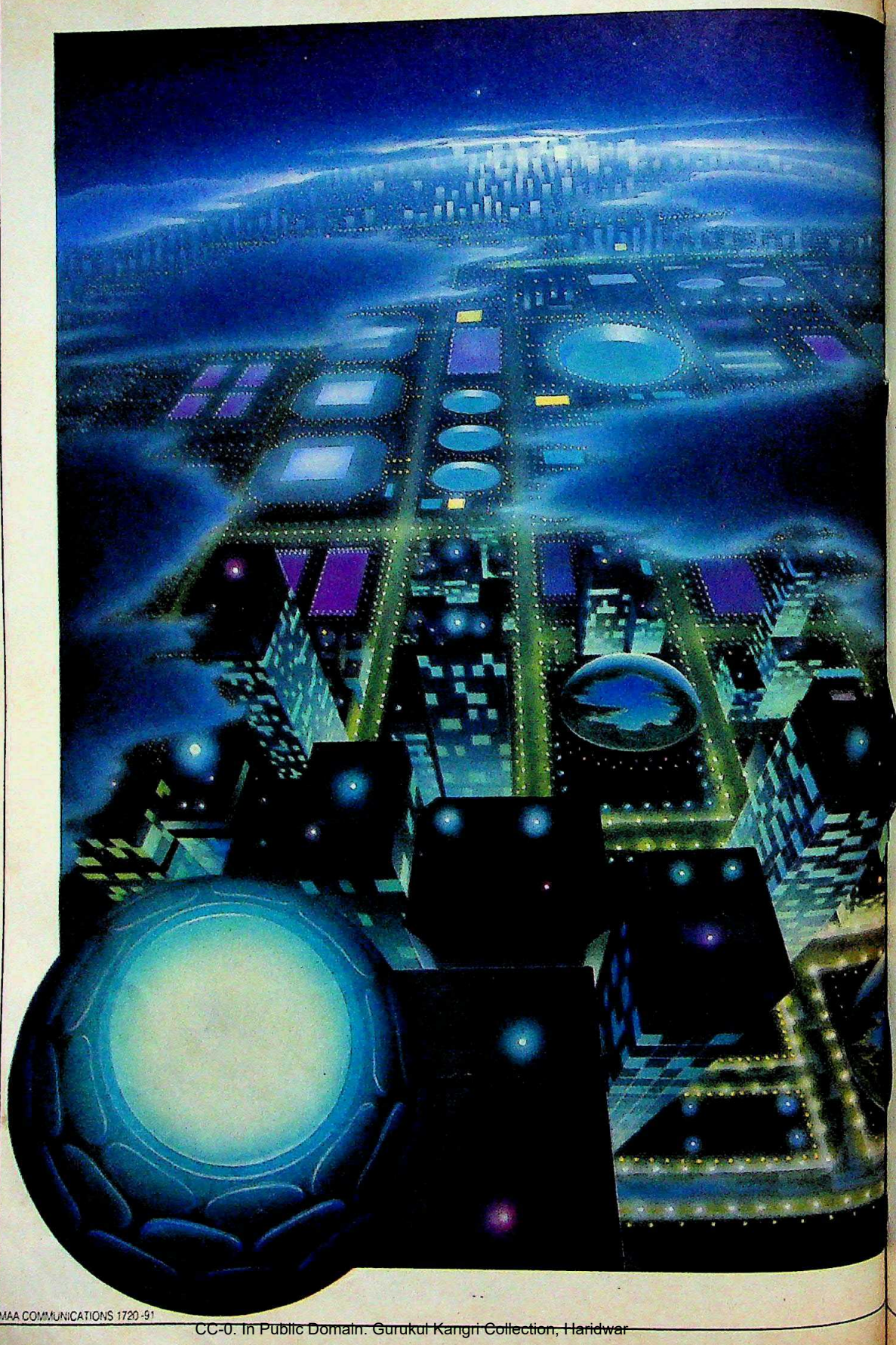

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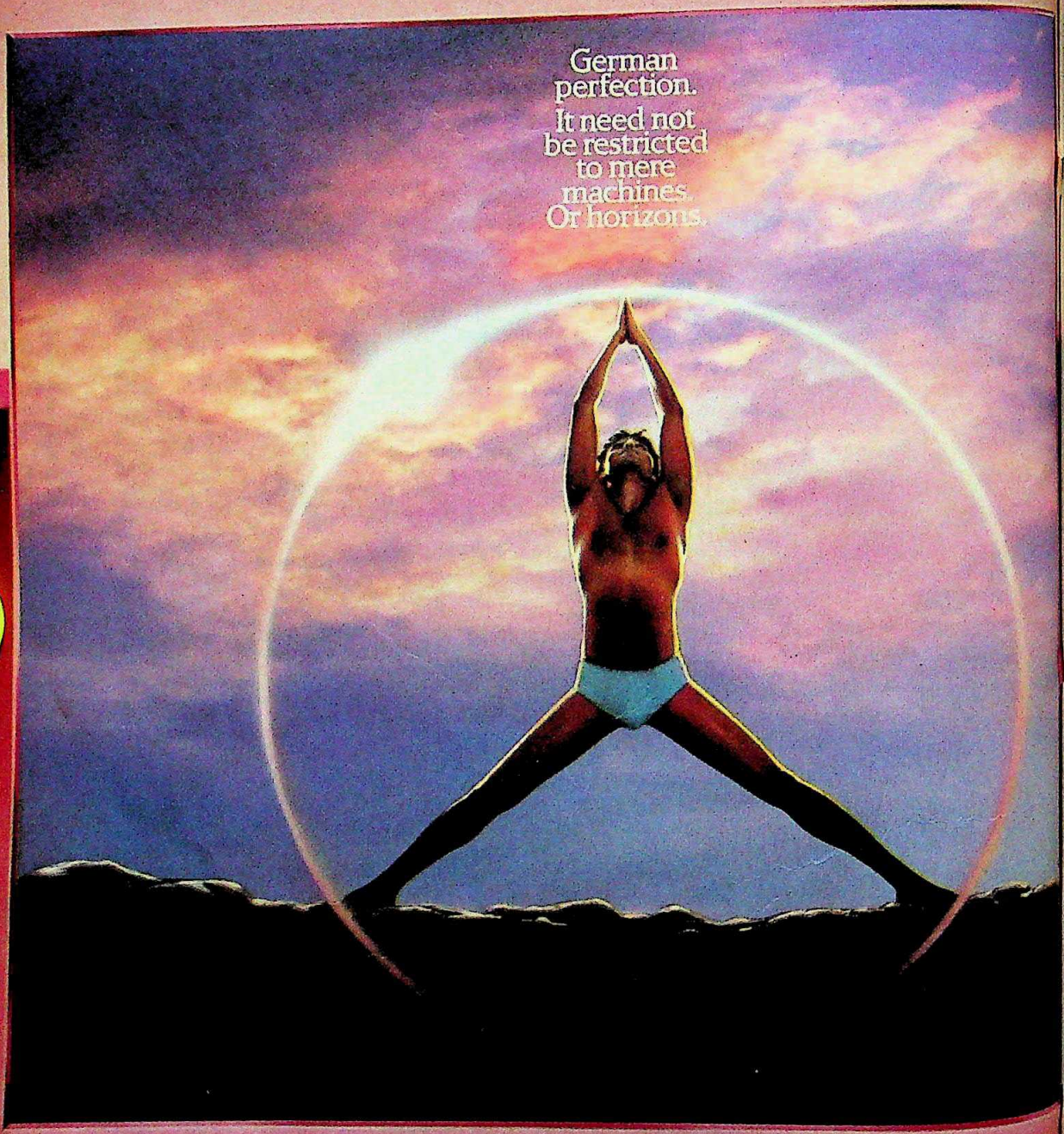

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SRI LANKA

The Double Game

Premadasa's new strategy against LTTE is risky

THERE couldn't have been a more telling indication of the Machiavellian game of realpolitik being played in Sri Lanka today. The vehicle carrying the three peacemakers from the London-based Quakers, who were returning from Jaffna last fortnight after meeting LTTE leaders, was suddenly confronted by a convoy of armoured personnel carriers headed in the other direction. These were 30 spanking new T-85s recently imported from China. Almost to the day, a consignment of Czech 27 T-55 main battle tanks was unloaded at Trincomalee.

The catch was: the Quakers' self-assumed peace mission had the blessings of the Premadasa Government which was also sending in direct peace offers and a high-powered emissary like Cabinet Minister S. Thondaman. And at the same time the Government was inducting armoured muscle into a military assault which gained momentum unprecedented since the early 1987 move on Vadamarachchi in Jaffna peninsula. So while the Colombo dailies, including the Government-controlled ones, were headlining "victories against terrorists", the diplomatic grapevine was abuzz with stories of mediation efforts.

Analysts and diplomats are reading significant meanings into what look like contradictory signals. President R. Premadasa is playing a shrewd, if risky, game, asking his military to step up pressure on the one hand and encouraging mediators on the other. "The key to his strategy," says a top diplomat, "is to keep both the Tigers and the mediators guessing." But surely one of his intentions is to score a point on the eve of the SAARC summit in Colombo next fortnight.

On the face of it this would seem to be a perfectly legitimate exercise. But in the process Premadasa too is riding a tiger, since his army, now plunged headlong into battle, is unlikely to take kindly to the behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Tigers. Particularly at a juncture, say Premadasa's detractors, when the tempo of fighting has gone very high. "An impression is growing that our President will make concessions to the Tigers at the cost of national interest and not listen to reason from even his own partymen," says former minister and party dissident Lalith Athulathmudali.

Significantly, in the past 16 months of fighting, the Sri Lankan Army has already suffered 4,300 casualties: 1,300 dead and 3,000 seriously wounded. This is more than the total casualties suffered by the IPKF in two and a half years, whose success rate was better. "The Indian Army is 1.1-million-strong and yet 1,200 dead sat on the conscience of your entire nation. We have an army of 62,000 and everyone has lost someone he knew personally," said a senior Sri Lankan army officer, predicting trouble if major concessions were made to the Tigers at this stage.

But, harried by the dissidents whose meetings have been drawing big crowds, Premadasa seems to have made up his mind to buy peace with the Tigers as long as they accept some kind of linkage with the republic. Meanwhile, he will give the army a free hand and if it fails to capture the Jaffna peninsula, which seems likely, ram a peace agreement down its throat.

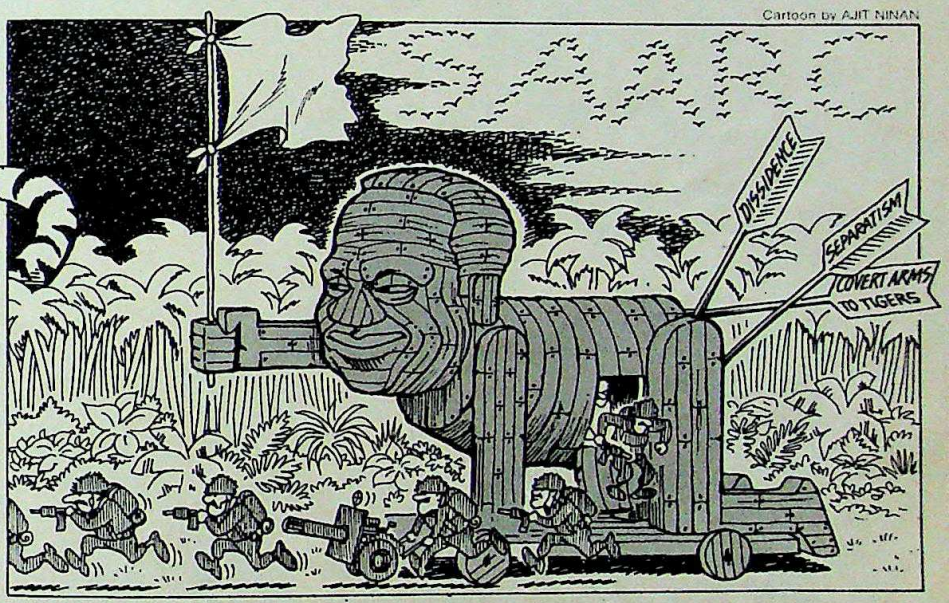
The peace proposals sent in through Thondaman, widely believed to have his concurrence, imply giving the Tigers everything short of total independence. With this, Premadasa has given up all his preconditions such as the presence of Pirabhakaran at the talks and laying down of arms. He has also guaranteed the merger of the north and east provinces, one of the more contentious LTTE demands. In addition, Thondaman's proposals acknowledge the LTTE as the only legitimate claimant to power in the Tamil region without even the nicety of an election.

Highly-placed sources say that while the battle rages on, the negotiations are in an advanced stage and even the Tigers, feeling the heat in the battlefield after suffering substantial losses at Elephant Pass and then at Mullaitivu, are willing to talk. This has very significant implications for India. "Does someone in South Block realise the consequences of Premadasa handing over the north and the east to the LTTE as a legitimate ruling party? What will it do to your security interests and the future of Tamil Nadu?" asks a ruling party dissident.

Sources in South Block, however, say that they are not oblivious of what is going on and when Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao goes to the SAARC summit, along with the usual diplomatic pleasantries, he will also be conveying India's grave apprehensions to his counterpart.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Colombo

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



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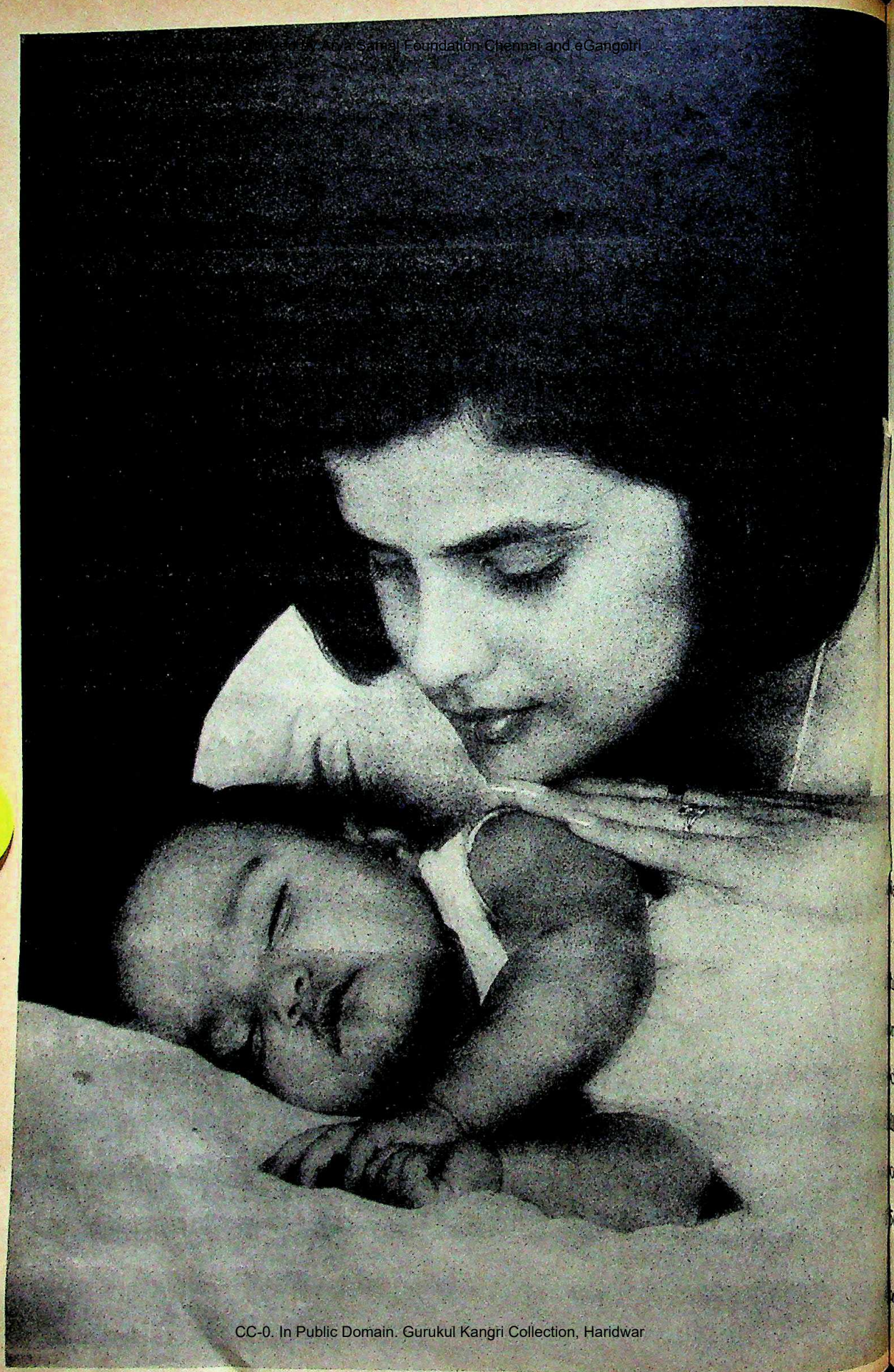

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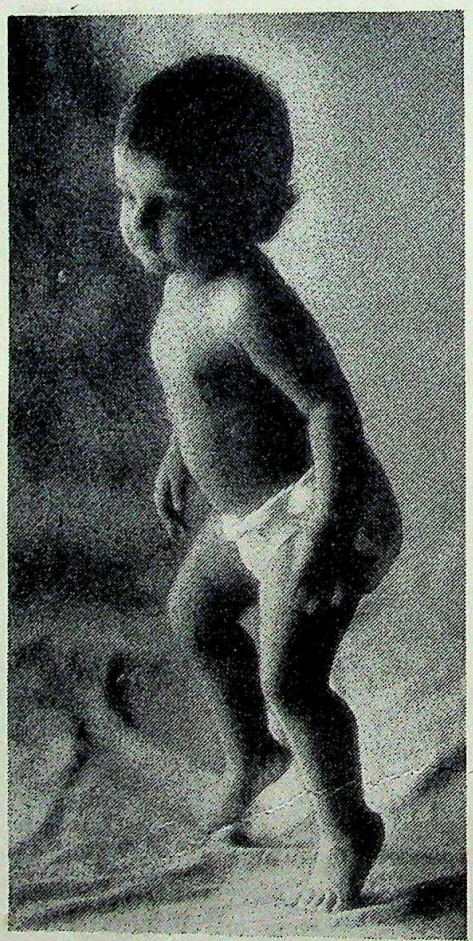

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HOCKEY

Rough Ride

India scampers to Barcelona

DOWN Under, India weren't exactly thunder on the hockey field. They were, instead, like a gentle, rolling wave, promising to coast home with the artistic harmony that has been the hallmark of subcontinental hockey and then petering out just when the destination seemed so close. Ultimately, it was luck, and not the mastery of stickwork or the craft of feint and dodge that saved Indian hockey the ultimate ignominy of failing to qualify for an Olympics since the golden debut in 1928. With tears streaming down his cheeks, Coach Balkrishen Singh admitted as much: "It's luck that saved us."

Flush with the recent victory in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup at Ipoh, India had started out favourites at Auckland. The equation was clear. There were four vacancies on the customary 12-country line-up for the Olympics at Barcelona. Grouped with the US, Belgium, Switzerland, France and Malaysia, India were considered a certainty. Till they began to mess things up.

Many in the team blame the cold weather but there has to be some reason for the lethargic Indian manner. The victories against Belgium and cowdy Switzerland were laboured and then stodgy France held India to a draw, it came down to the India-Malaysia match. The cliff-hanger went Malaysia's way, and India had only themselves to blame.

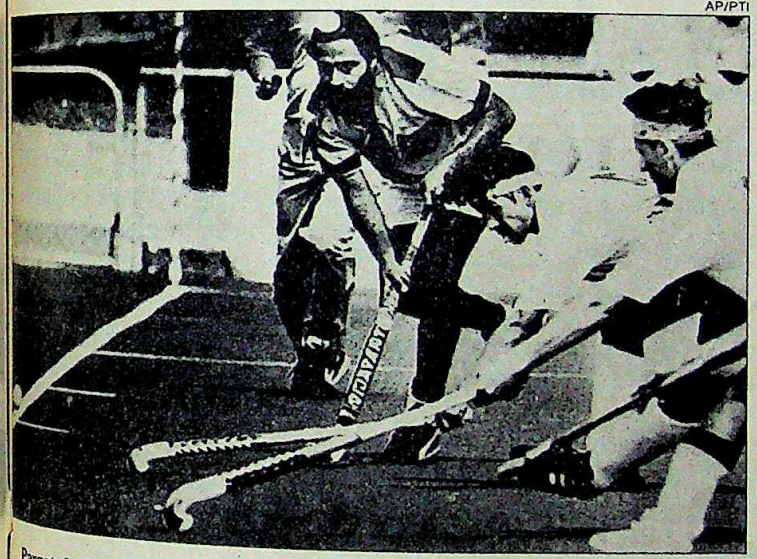
On a rough count India had four times as many scoring opportunities as Malaysia but frittered them away. The team complained bitterly of a biased decision by the Australian umpire. And yet they had to swallow their pride and plead with the Malaysians to take their league match with Belgium seriously. Had the Belgians managed to draw, they would have tied with India on points (7-7) and qualified on better goal average. Malaysia coach Terry Walsh did India a favour by making his boys defeat Belgium and India were home, though humiliated.

But Balkrishen and skipper Pargat Singh have one advantage. They think hockey and also talk about it between themselves. So the lessons of Auckland are being quickly tabulated. First of all, India has still not found the answer to western packed defences. The Pakistanis and Australians, who play the game like India, have got past this through better speed and a uniformly good forward line. India doesn't have either. The reliance on Mukesh Kumar and Jagbir became a liability.

Relieved to have earned their tickets to Barcelona, the team managers are now doing some hard thinking. To have any chance of reaching the last four stage in the Olympics they will have to win at least three clear victories at the league stage. And unless Balkrishen and his boys perfect new tactics to outflank packed defences or improve penalty corner conversions, they could end up fighting only for minor placings in the end.

—TONY SINGH in Auckland

AP/PTI



Pargat: India's wasted chances

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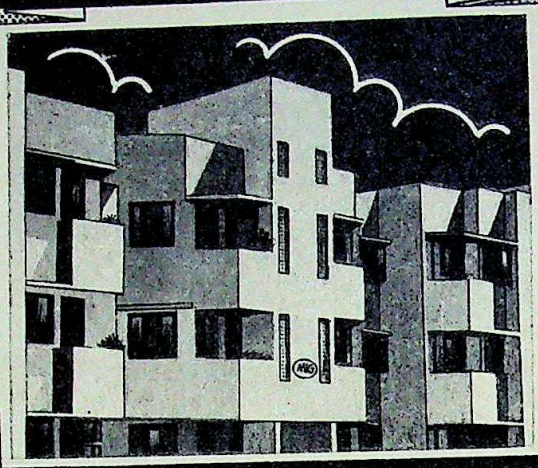

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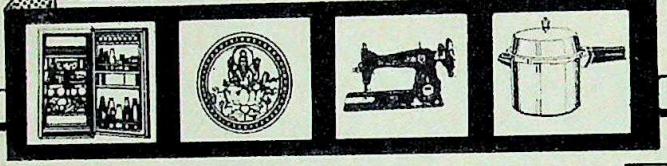

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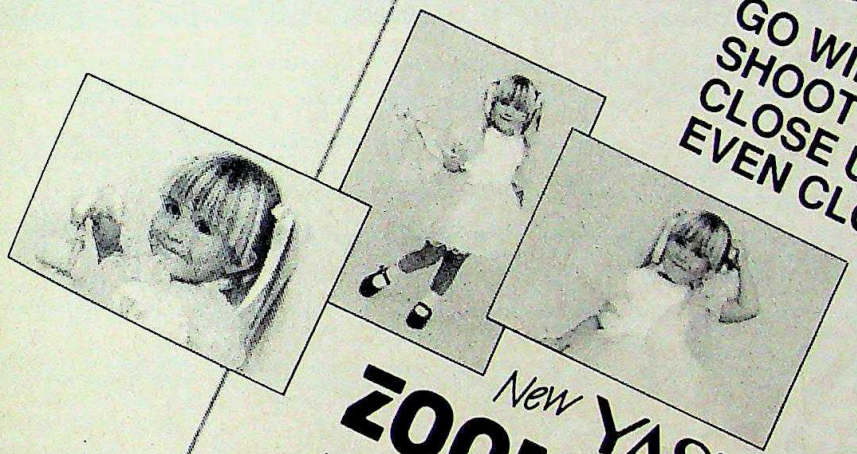

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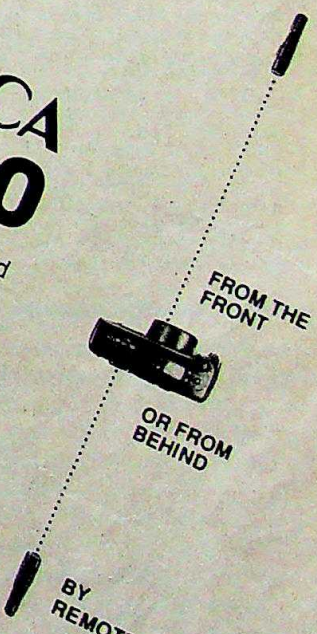

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SHARAD SAXENA

■ Shiny (second from right) with other Indian medal winners

ATHLETICS

Shiny Saves Face

Poor showing at ATF highlights official ineptitude

NO one really expected India to mint gold at the Ninth Asian Track and Field Championships. Especially after the shenanigans that had put in jeopardy the contingent's participation till the last hour. So, if last fortnight Shiny Wilson, 26, snatched two golds and a silver in Kuala Lumpur, it only underlined the awesome talent of some individuals which can tide over even the hurdles created by Indian officialdom.

Shiny's was a glorious comeback to competition after two years and a daughter. Moreover, her silver in 800m came without any preparation.

There must be many red faces in the Sports Department. Shiny wasn't even cleared for the meet. Nor were any of the other women in the 27-member team. Yet, they brought India both its golds, three out of four silver and one out of two bronze medals. The Government paid for only four athletes, all men—Vijaykumaran and Jossey Mathew, Shyam Kumar and Bahadur Prasad. None returned with a medal.

Clearly, the Indian performance was hobbled by sports politics. The endless sparring between the Amateur Athletic Federation of India (AAFI) and the Sports Authority of India (SAI) peaked when the Government told the AAFI to "send the athletes at your own cost and we will reimburse if they win gold or silver". That, plus the changing qualification standards kept the athletes chewing their nails.

The problems only put Shiny's marvellous achievement in perspective. It is not easy for anyone to step into Usha's spikes. Says Shiny, modestly: "Usha used to do it with much better timing." Not as talented as Usha, she makes it up with guts. The 800m semi-final left her with no medal hope. But, in the final, head down, teeth clenched, Shiny suddenly discovered an extra gear, clocking 2:05.

Shiny struck her individual gold in the 400m, won by Usha the last four times, with 53.46. The bronze went to K. Saramma who produced her career best timing of 53.51 seconds.

With Shiny and Saramma in the 4x400 quartet, a win was on the cards. But losing to China at Beijing and to Japan at the world meet at Tokyo put psychological pressure on them. Yet in the final, after Ashwini Nachappa passed on the baton well ahead, the other three increased the gap to more than 10 metres finishing with 3:33.50.

The barefoot distance duo of Molly Chacko and L. Leelamma also shone. Molly kept China's formidable Zhong Huandi within her sight till the last 250 metres in the 3,000m. And won a silver with 9:14.07. Leelamma too won a silver in the 10,000m with 35:38.90, way behind Huandi's 33:42.77.

The growing gap between Indian athletes and the Asian competition was most glaring in the men's events. Only Shakti Singh could muster a silver in discus and Sucha Singh a bronze in the 20 km walk.

The biggest disappointment was Bahadur Prasad who was slated to collect a medal each in the 1,500m and the 5,000m. But then he barely had any big-event exposure. In the 5,000m, his adversary Qatarian Mohammed Sulaiman knew exactly when to strike but he did not.

Vijaykumaran got knocked out as he slowed at the end of his 800m semi, finishing fourth. Jossey Mathew made it to the 800m final, but lacked staying power. Pyare Lal's failure in 3,000m steeplechase can perhaps be ascribed to an unsavoury doping controversy. The SAI had tested him positive but the AAFI refused to take notice.

There's a lesson to be learnt from China's haul of 24 out of 40 gold medals. All its coaches do is give the athletes the best training and then swim or sink with them. As Lee Evans, former Olympic champion and Qatar's coach, puts it: "If China and Qatar have vastly improved, it's because of focus." Words of wisdom. But is anyone listening?

—ASIM HANDA in Kuala Lumpur

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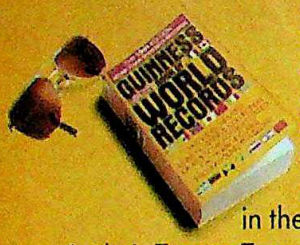

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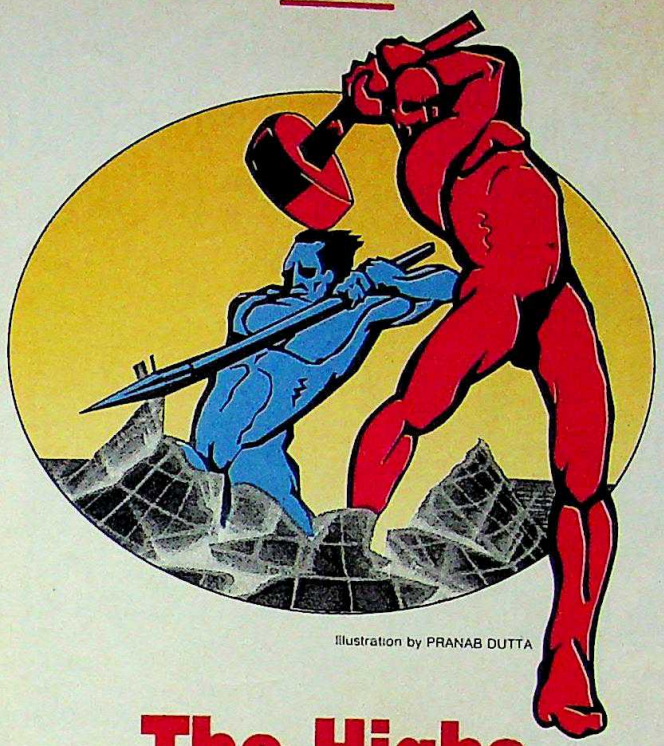

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA

The Highs of Violence

TARUN J. TEJPAL

THE problem with violence, like most irksome things, is that it is addictive. Only the first hammer-blow causes anguish; only the first lunge of the disembowelling knife is preceded by pangs. Like a beneficent saint, the conscience rapidly learns to forgive. Thereafter there is a high, the kind that has always fuelled marauding armies to greater feats of rapine. The kind the Nazis experienced as they clicked home the locks on Jewish gas chambers; and the Khmer Rouge felt as it planted dead bodies in water-soaked fields like seasonal paddy; the kind a lumpen rode as it torched Sikhs with the fizzy frenzy of cracker-crazed boys. Not too dissimilar from the sensation that erupts after the first shallow drag behind the school toilet; after the first sweaty grope in the movie hall. Also, akin to what Graham Bell must have experienced when Watson's voice sailed across coiled wires; to what must have coursed through Yeats when the gyres of sound suddenly fell into mellifluous patterns.

Mahatma Gandhi notwithstanding, the world, and India, will never be non-violent. This has something to do with that elusive 'high'. Achievement sets it off: so Einstein and Eisenstein, and your successful neighbourhood salesman, never really needed to clobber anyone. Drugs, in their psychedelic variety, are known to do a fine job; and with the Beats—Burroughs, Ginsberg, Kerouac—even produced achievement, whilst they have always delivered our loin-clothed mystics into nirvanic trances. Then there is *soma*. The ancient Aryans under its propitiatory influence hallucinated into ethereal immensities; ever since, gallons of ferment consumed worldwide have transformed small men into big men. As for the high of love and sex, words fail even poets: and writers and film directors resort to melodramatic metaphors like clashing cymbals and spinning stars.

But love and sex are not available in egalitarian ration; and success is not everyone's apple to pluck. A global morality hangs heavy over drug-use; and even those beyond its censorious pale, experience as much decrepitude and despair as euphoria.

Violence on the other hand costs nothing; and after a few initial essays leaves no hang-over. Nor like love and sex does it need the compliance of a partner. When it is a game of solitaire, with the servant or schoolboy easing open the window latch to pound in the landlady's skull, the player banks on only his skills and chance. And when it swells to a chorus, as with rampaging mobs and murderous militants, it acquires the glories of a cause, shedding the last vestiges of any humanitarian accountability. It becomes a guiltless act, one's karma, an unfolding chapter in a deterministic universe.

Moralists would have us believe that guilt haunts the violent. But crime writers, who know their subjects better, talk of the euphoria serial killers experience after each act of decapitating violence. And not only serial killers: the perpetrators of wanton violence too display a similar air of irresponsible happiness. Alex and his three droogs as they romp through Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* feel wholesome only when they have been tolchocking someone senseless. And those who fling dangerous projectiles at protest rallies generally spend the afterhours exulting over cups of tea. Also, no credible reports have ever appeared of any rampaging terrorists or eye-plucking, sodomising policemen voluntarily rueing their day's handiwork.

"Have no doubt it is fear in the land. For what can men do when so many have grown lawless? Who can enjoy the lovely land, the seventy years, and the sun that pours down on the earth, when there is fear in the heart?" Those who leap at the truth in Alan Paton's words, need to look reality in the eye: that as all other highs continue to elude the majority, violence, from whence fear springs in all its soul-stultifying menace, far from abating will actually increase. The non-achievers, the loveless; the denied will acquire guns, pick up crowbars, sharpen knives, and await opportunity's tread, when in a blinding moment of physicality—intense as an orgasm, intense as a sportsperson at full stretch—the high will be theirs.

And those denied a legitimate high are a burgeoning legion. Denied the rolling sportsfields, the tube-filled labs, the corporate collars, and love's lies, an army of ravenous ants is streaming forth from slums and tenements and middle class homes. "Their souls, their organs of wonder, stunted, petrified," in the words of South African writer J.M. Coetzee, they march forth, poised to create a Mandal if one did not exist; to contest a masjid were not dozens disputed; to start a terrorist brigade were there not many to join.

Poised to plunge the upraised arm and seize that elusive high. ■

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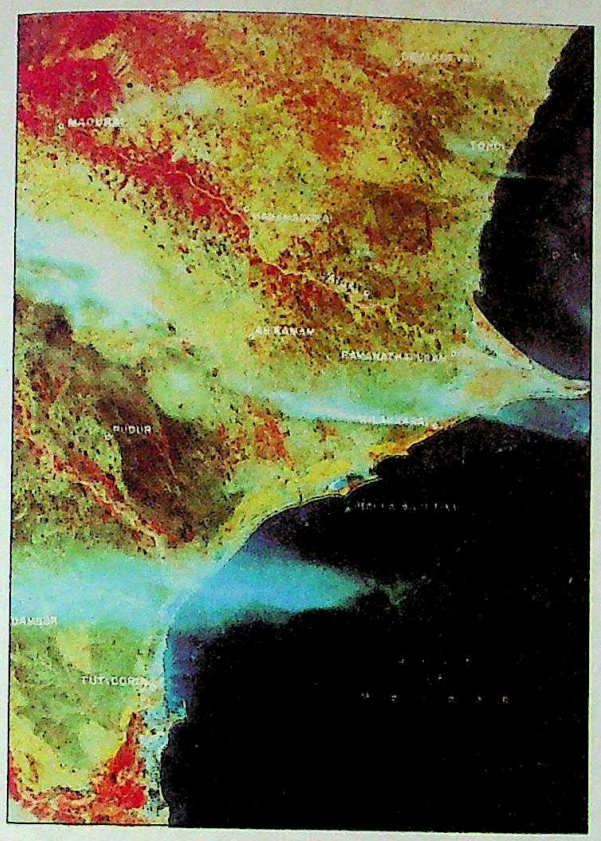
IRS 1B imageries too, are flawless

IT is as big as a washing machine. Weighs as much as a Fiat car. And its giant honey-comb solar panels spread out like the wings of some pre-historic bird. But what distinguishes this ocean-blue and gold finely-crafted 985-kg of aluminium are two precise cameras that scan the country with hawk-like precision. The images sent back are fast becoming the mainstay of an information revolution that encompasses every sphere of Indian life.

Last month, Indian Remote Sensing Satellite (IRS) 1B as this hi-tech metal box is known, was declared "fully operational" by the country's space scientists. That was a tremendous boost for the Rs 102-crore remote sensing programme, designed to help governmental agencies make optimal use of land and water resources.

With IRS 1A, launched in 1988, nearing the end of its lifespan, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was keen that its successor be up and clicking so the programme would not suffer. In the past three years, IRS 1A has flown past the country 55 times and beamed back over 1.5 lakh high-quality images. Based on the concept that all objects reflect light and have a unique spectral signature, the images of IRS 1A have been put to diverse uses like:

- Helping the Agriculture Ministry compute crop acreage and yields of major foodgrains.
- Predicting floods in rivers like the Brahmaputra and the Ganges.
- Mapping groundwater resources in the country. Already over 1 lakh boreholes have been dug in villages based on its images.
- Providing pictures for oil exploration.



First picture taken from IRS 1B

► And through thermal imageries, helping west coast fishermen track shoals of fish and trap them.

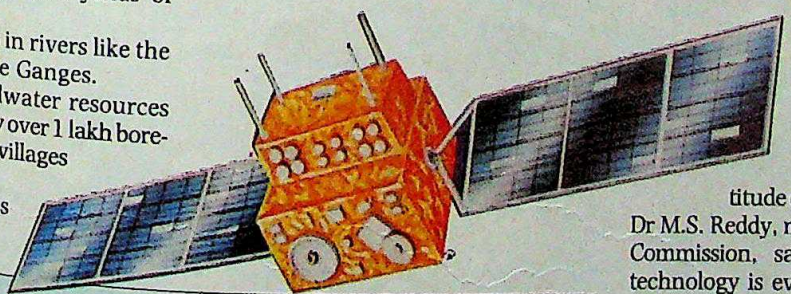
Built at a cost of Rs 15 crore, the new satellite is meant primarily to replace the dying IRS 1A. But it is not a carbon copy. ISRO scientists have made its camera directional control systems more precise and reduced the margin of error considerably. Geometric distortions affecting imagery have been eliminated. ISRO Chairman Professor U.R. Rao says: "Our satellite compares with state-of-the-art ones like Landsat. And some features are far better. Even the World Bank has acknowledged that IRS imageries are superior."

Over the years too, ISRO has built up an intricate and sophisticated network to control the satellite, receive the data and interpret it. The nerve centre is the Spacecraft Control Centre at Peenya in Bangalore which controls most of the satellite's instruments through telecommands. Helping to maintain its flight path are a network of ISRO ground stations located across the country as well as those hired from other space agencies worldwide. Analysis and interpretation of the IRS data is done at the National Remote Sensing Agency at Shadnagar, Hyderabad. After that, 20 Central Government departments and agencies use it.

But the process of getting the agencies to use IRS data faced much resistance initially. For example, scientists at the Indian Council for Agricultural Research were sceptical about crop production estimates based on IRS data. But after several successful predictions, most user agencies' attitude changed. In New Delhi, Dr M.S. Reddy, member, Central Water Commission, says: "Remote sensing technology is evolving so fast, we can only find more uses for the data."

Meanwhile, ISRO is getting ready to build a more powerful second generation of remote sensing satellites. IRS 1C, to be launched by 1994, would be light years ahead in technology. And by the turn of the century, India will have a network of satellites that Professor Rao predicts, "will help us look at a totality of information like it has never been looked at before".

—SARITHA RAI



IRS: EYES OF A HAWK

- Has helped map the country's forest cover, estimate crop production and guide flood relief work.
- Now being used for checking town planning, oil exploration and studying movement of fish.
- The two Indian satellites are state-of-the-art and an improved version is under way.

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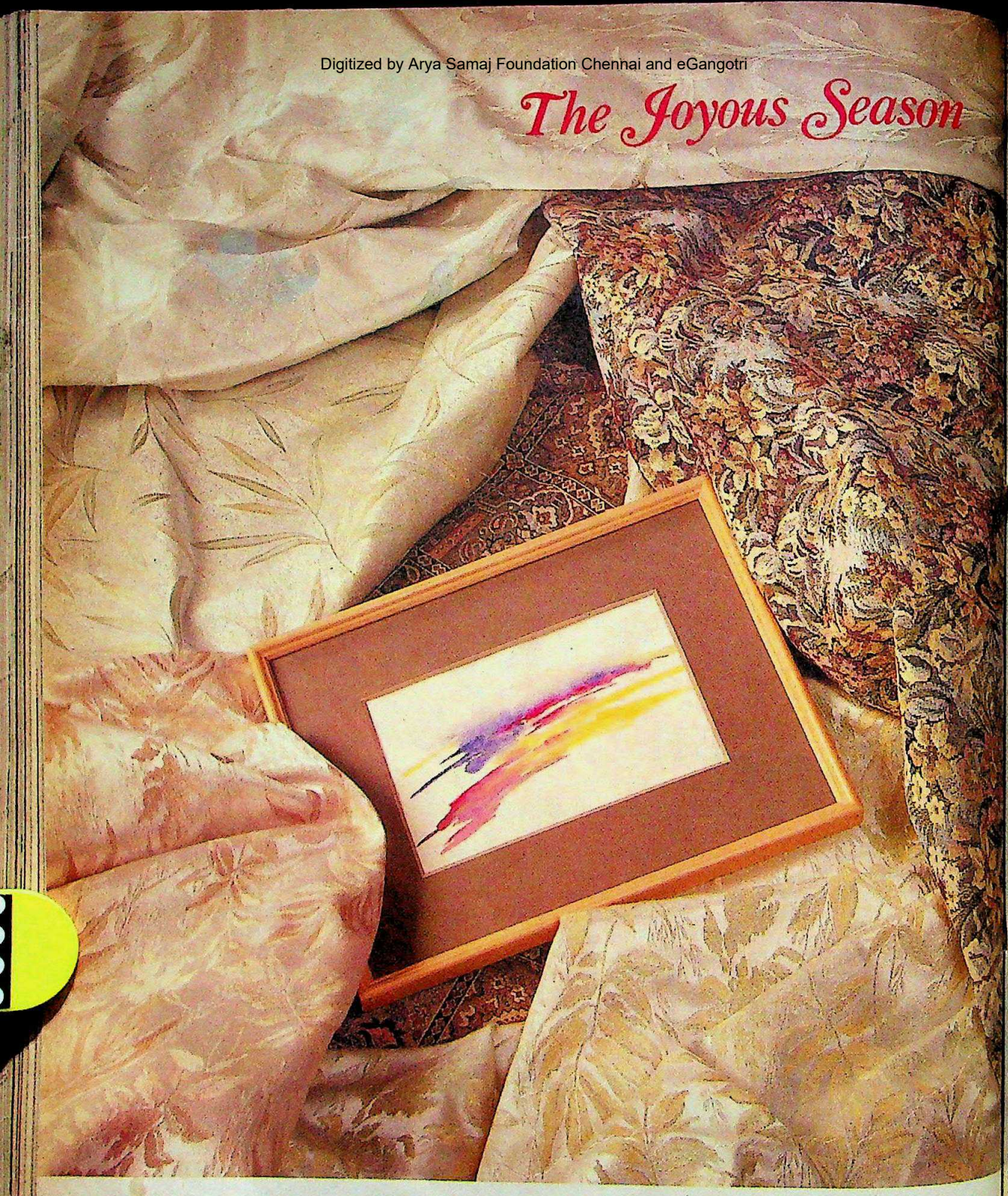

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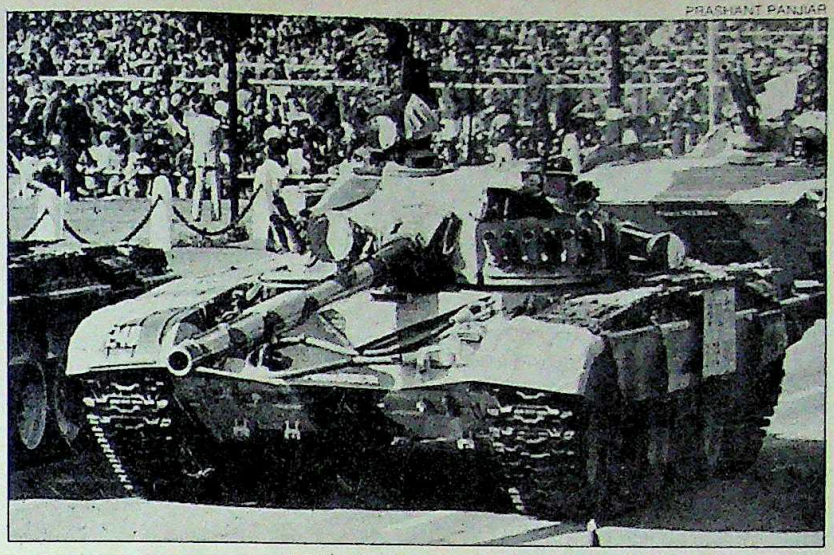
THE ARMED FORCES

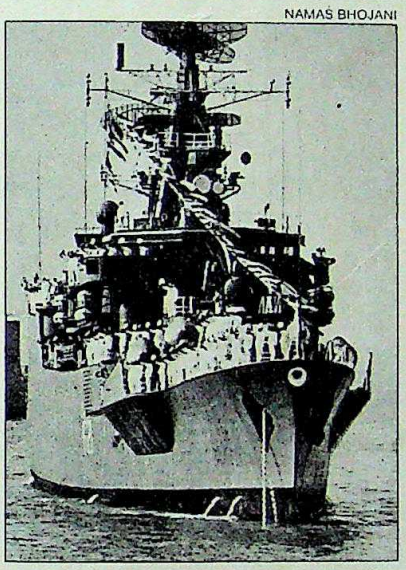
Chinks in the Armour

As the squeeze tells on forces, radical measures are contemplated.

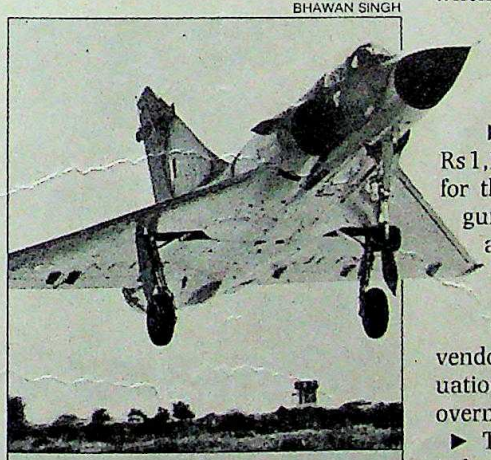
PRASHANT PANJIAR



NAMAS BHOJANI



BHAWAN SINGH



(From top) T-72 tanks, a navy frigate, and a Mirage 2000

A 30-per cent reduction in training and shortage of spares has increased India's vulnerability.

THE formidable Indian war machine—the fourth largest in the world and regarded as a rising superpower just a couple of years ago—is in full retreat. Confronted with a shrinking budget in real terms for the third consecutive year, the foreign exchange crunch aggravated by the 27 per cent devaluation of the rupee this year, and the uncertainty of supply of critical spares from the Soviet Union following the aborted coup in August, the services are, clearly, reeling from this lethal 'triple hammer blow'.

This, say military experts, may actually have made India vulnerable on the defence front. Says former lieutenant general Mathew Thomas, editor, *Indian Defence Review*: "If we go to war in the next year or so, we won't be able to sustain it for more than 30 days." Defence observers fear that the fighting edge of the forces may have already been blunted. Says a foreign diplomat: "India very nearly went to war with Pakistan last year given a quarter of the provocation it is facing today." But now, it is sitting tight despite regular firing along the border.

Although this year's budget is an increase of Rs 600 crore over last year's figure of Rs 15,750 crore, experts argue that this is less than a 4-per cent hike and does not even cover the 10-per cent annual inflation. Usually a 15-per cent increase is required just to "mark time". But in fact, for the past three years the growth of the defence budget has been well below 10 per cent, and does not even cover the galloping inflation (*see chart*).

And the results of the crunch are already visible. Consider the following:

► The squadron strength of the Indian Air Force (IAF) has already dropped from 40 to 35. A number of frontline aircraft—particularly the MiG 29s and MiG 27s—have not been operational for want of spares. Many squadron commanders have complained that they are desperately short of ammunition.

► The IAF has not been able to meet the import requirements for the Jaguar aircraft. Consequently, the Government and Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) have begun negotiating with vendors on counter trade or rupee payment for importing components for the Jaguar (*see box*).

► The army simply cannot afford to build up a 'brick' of 72 tanks for its T-72 armoured regiments—which will form the backbone of its assault. A 'brick' refers to the ideal number of tanks that a regiment should have when it goes to war. But today, the 'brick' is just 55 tanks. Which means that on the second day of battle, the regiment is bound to be understrength.

► The army has got only Rs 1,100 crore to service old contracts for the purchase of howitzers, field guns and heavy vehicles from abroad. This is Rs 300 crore less than the Rs 1,400 crore contractual commitment that the service had made to various vendors for the year. And with devaluation, this figure of Rs 1,400 crore overnight rose to Rs 1,700 crore.

► This in turn is bound to delay the induction of equipment. For instance, the 155 mm Bofors howitzers. The army is suddenly short of as many as 400 of these guns. Which leaves nearly 10 regiments with outdated guns.

► The frequency of exercises has already been drastically reduced. In the army, a division level exercise is now held once in two years instead of every year. Similarly, the IAF will be

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able to complete only two-thirds of the stipulated 180 hours of annual flying time laid down for each fighter pilot. The navy too will curtail its long cruises in the future by as much as 30 per cent.

Critical long-term modernisation too has been put on the backburner. The proposal to get force multipliers and electronic warfare systems, to match the Pakistani capability, has been deferred. And today while Pakistan has an edge over India in locating radars and electronic surveillance, the country is falling short of even reliable cipher equipment.

The army has given up its plans for setting up Remotely Piloted Vehicle (RPV) units, an armed helicopter fleet, as well as a regiment equipped with the Prithvi surface-to-surface missiles.

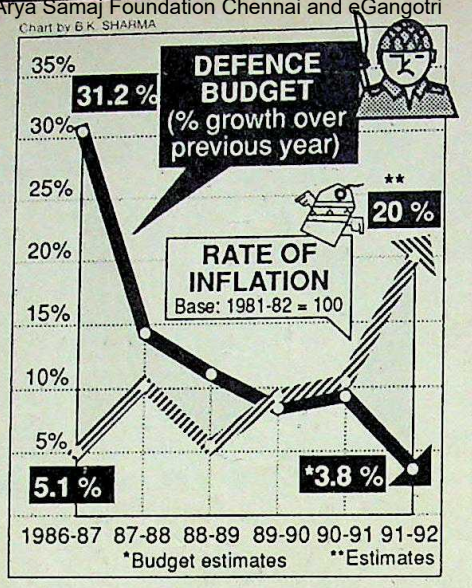
The navy's programme to manufacture major warships and replace its ageing fleet of the Indian-made Leanders and the Soviet-built Foxtrot submarines has also gone haywire. No new capital warship is likely to join the navy till 1995. The result: while the navy's objectives now includes the protection of the 200 million sq km Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), its force levels today are almost the same as they were 30 years ago, when all it had to defend was the coastline.

Worse, the world's fourth largest air force, which has graduated from the outdated MiG 21s to the state-of-the-art MiG 29s and Mirage 2000s does not even have the wherewithal to buy a modern jet trainer. The IAF's demand for an Advanced Jet Trainer made way back in the '70s is nowhere in sight.

Notes Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, director of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Analysis: "The ad hoc annual cut backs are bound to affect modernisation and training and therefore overall defence preparedness."

Confronted with a shrinking budget and an increasingly precarious supply line, the services have undertaken exercises to cut costs. And it is the still classified seven-part report of the Arun Singh Committee on Defence Expenditure that

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



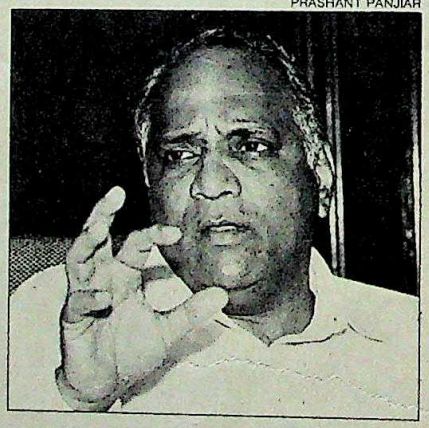
The growth of the defence budget does not even cover the galloping inflation.

SHARAD PAWAR

"We will sell guns"

FOR Defence Minister Sharad Pawar, 51, the first three months in office have been hectic. There was the trip to the Siachen glacier; jackstaying at sea during a naval exercise; visits to the defence R&D establishments. In between, Pawar spoke to Senior Correspondent W.P.S. SIDHU. *Excerpts:*

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Q. How bad is the resource crunch?

A. We've got Rs 16,350 crore for the year. But just to manage from day to day, we need Rs 17,000 crore. And the devaluation and the rise in fuel costs has affected us to the tune of Rs 2,000 crore. The problem will be really of modernisation of equipment.

Q. Where can you earn money?

A. We could use ordnance factories—which are under-utilised—to supply guns to the Home Ministry which is keen to buy them. We have decided to sell off all surplus stores.

Q. But how will you ensure that productivity will improve?

A. I am trying to associate the private sector to help in it for two reasons. First, many of the items now being made can be handed over to them. Second, machines worth Rs 40 crore are lying idle. Why not let the private sector use them?

Q. What about export of arms?

A. A separate government-run agency for arms exports will never work. Let ordnance factories use the services of reputed export houses.

Q. But can India compete in the world arms bazaar?

A. We can certainly do well in the sale of spares. We have started getting enquiries from the Gulf and Afro-Asian countries. And if we get permission to export Soviet arms and spares that are licence-produced here, we could make a dent in the arms market. Our export target for this year was Rs 80 crore, by the end of October we would have finalised deals worth Rs 600 crore.

Q. What equipment will you be exporting and to which countries?

A. Well, I cannot tell you the countries because they have asked us not to disclose their names. But we will be exporting guns of all kinds, ammunition and electronic systems. They are not offensive weapons but are just meant to protect their bases.

Q. Is there a policy not to export offensive arms?

A. There is no such policy.

Q. Will Government implement the Arun Singh Committee report?

A. The Arun Singh report has not reached me so far. But we need to have a three to five-year-long planning for weapons acquisition.

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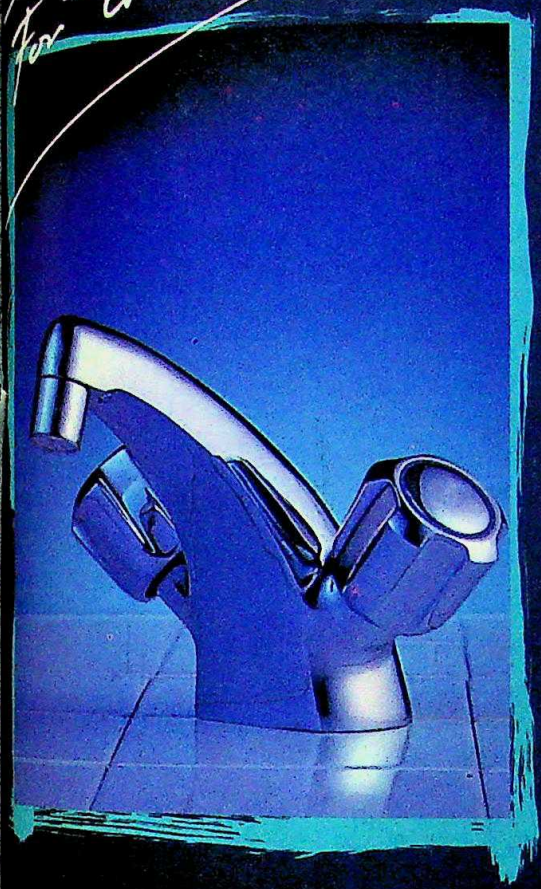

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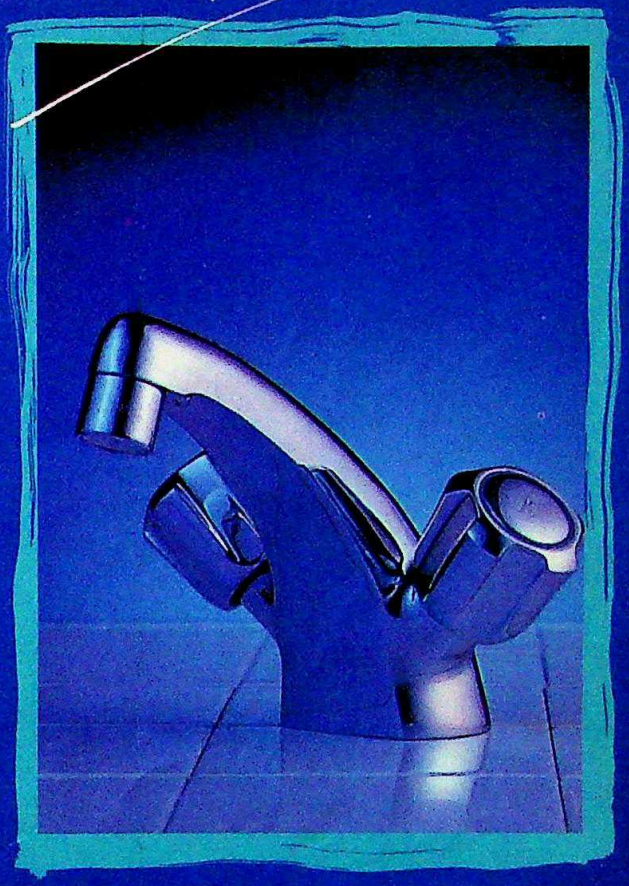

The designer craze is all over. From jeans to furniture. From cars to fittings. Everything seems to wear a designer label these days. But as we all know, fads have a finite life cycle. And over time, they tend to just fade away. Designer labels just vanish. In any case most 'designer' stuff is esoteric, yes. But practical? Usable? At ARK we believe our products should not merely have cosmetic beauty. Which is why each one of our 250 products is designed to perfection. To last. To stand upto the rigours of time. And the demands of daily use. The ISI certification (where specified) and approval from the Bombay Municipal Corporation is testimony to our quality standards. And our commitment to products that last. By design.

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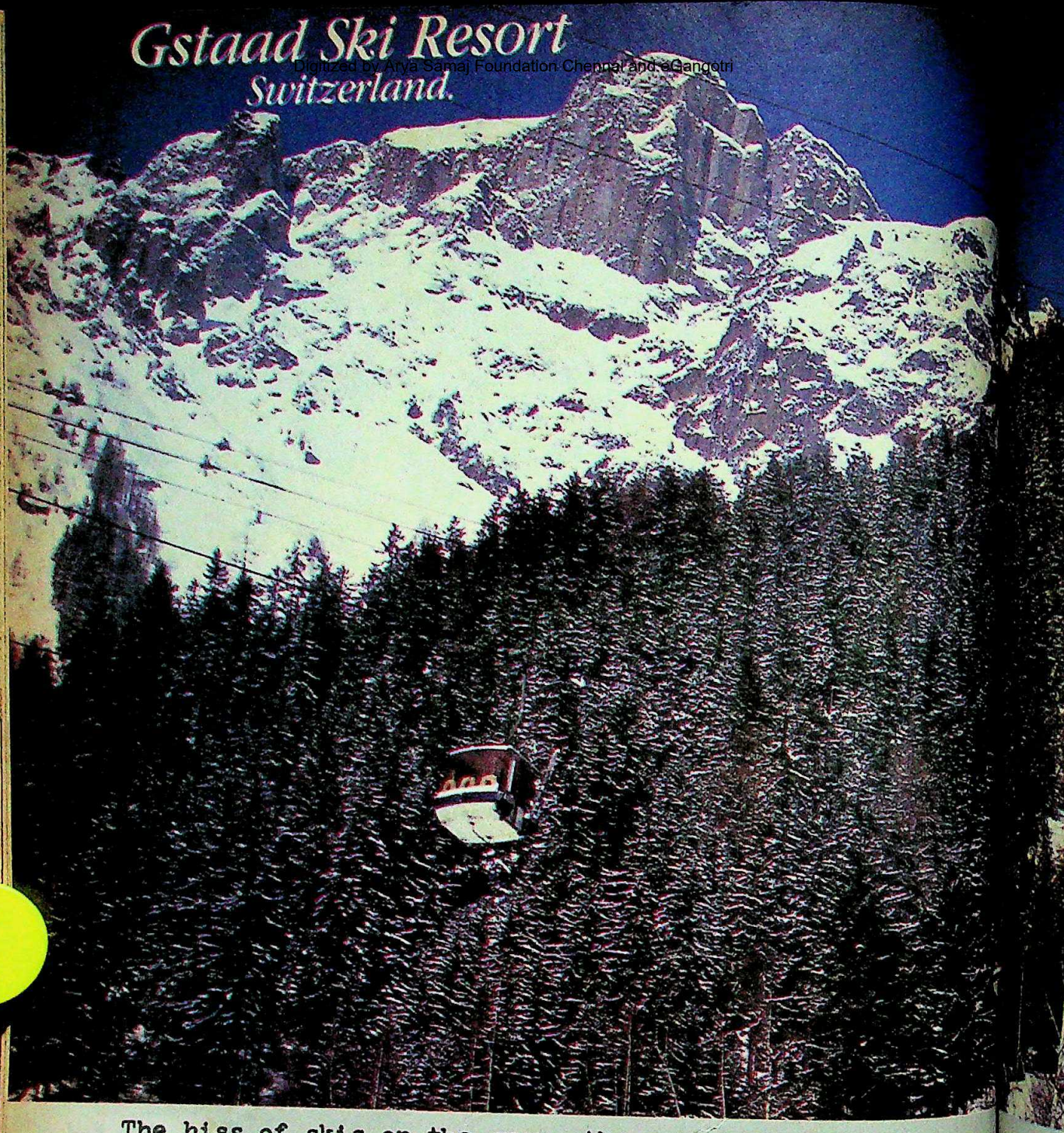

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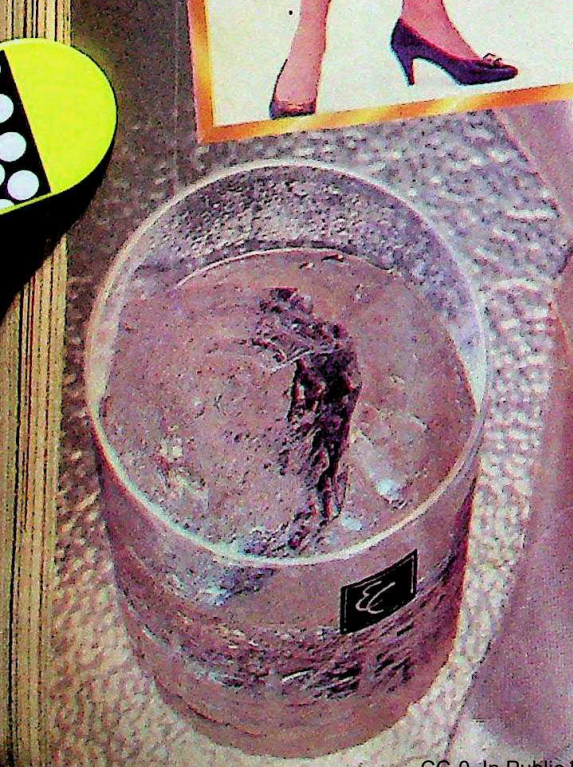
The Executive Profile by Executive Club

Competition brings out the best in a winner

Competition inspires you, taking you to greater heights. And the heady taste of success. After all, it's a matter of making the right choice. At the right time.



Executive Club

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may hold the key to dramatically reducing costs. But until now, it has not even been considered by the defence minister.

The services, however, have already made moves to cut expenses. The army is now conducting a study of costing every unit of the army. Similarly, the Government is also contemplating selling off all surplus stores. The expected returns: more than Rs 10,000 crore at the present market value.

The country also hopes to get Soviet permission to sell arms licence-produced—like the T-72 tanks and small missile boats—to third countries. But even this may not help India break into the highly competitive arms bazaar. Admits S. Krishna Kumar, minister of state for defence production: "In our potential export market, we have to face stiff competition from developed countries not only in terms of prices but also in terms of technical sophistication."

But even improved exports are not likely to make the forces flush with funds or resolve the severe resource crunch. What is required is a realistic enunciation of the nation's threat perception, and mending borders wherever possible. Says American Professor Stephen Cohen, author of several books on the Indian and Pakistani armed forces: "For most countries the threat expands according to the resources available." Clearly, now is the time for India to make a realistic assessment of its threats.

—W.P.S.SIDHU

Jaguar at HAL: no spare parts

DEFENCE PRODUCTION

In Reverse Gear

THE squeeze on the defence services resources has trickled down to the eight Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) who suddenly find their order books empty. Bharat Electronics (BE) and Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL), two of the bigger DPSUs, are facing the brunt of the forex crunch.

Bharat Electronics, for instance, had a foreign exchange requirement of Rs 249 crore for 1991-92. But RBI refused permission for capital imports and the allotted foreign exchange, resulting in a shortfall of Rs 129 crore. This will impinge on three strategic projects requiring large amounts of forex. One is for radar programmes over the next few years for which BE needs forex worth Rs 70 crore. If this is not available, deliveries will be delayed. "Against an order of say 100 radars, we will be able to deliver only 25," says BE Chairman P.D. Modak.

Though the forex crunch is acute, most DPSUs may just be able to tide over this year, with its management talking in terms of negotiating credit. Says Modak: "This year we can manage. But next year, when we have to repay all the credit as well as meet the year's requirement, is when we'll really feel the crunch." He doubts even if the year's target of Rs 810 crore will be realised. Says he: "This was set in anticipation of some orders. But because of the budget cuts, they may not materialise."

The scenario at HAL is not optimistic either. Some divisions are being utilised at upto one-third of their capacity. Says HAL Chairman and Managing Director R.N. Sharma: "If I have a capacity for producing 12 Dornier aircraft per year, I'll be closing the line at producing only four or five. The capacity utilisation comes straight down to 33 per cent."

The forex crunch is hitting all HAL projects. Its Advance Light Helicopter (ALH) programme is at a very crucial developmental stage. The test flight for the first prototype had been planned for 1989, so HAL is already behind schedule and the forex crunch will cause further delays. Explains Sharma: "There are certain small items required for the ALH but we couldn't open the letter of credit. This put us back by some months. Of course, I can test-fly the ALH even without these items. But the forex crunch will delay the later prototypes."

The company admits it has stopped production of Jaguars after March 31, 1991, again because of the crunch. Admits Sharma: "If it hadn't been for the major forex shortfall, we would have continued production of the aircraft." Consequently, HAL's turnover target for 1991-92 is down to Rs 780 crore compared to last year's turnover of Rs 926 crore.

HAL has orders for supplying Chetak and Cheetah helicopters for defence use. But for their production, it needs French imports which take up to 25 months to be delivered. Its own delivery schedule has been disrupted. Instead of making deliveries next year, HAL will only be able to start executing these orders two years from now. HAL is trying to offset such losses by taking on more aircraft maintenance jobs for the air force, navy and the coast guard. "But," says Sharma tellingly, "this is not why HAL was created. We are slowly becoming a service department rather than a production unit."

—SARITHA RAI in Bangalore

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PAKISTAN

A Creative Rebellion

Artistes employ subterfuge to bypass censors

PURITANICAL killjoys have been ruling the roost in Pakistan, where censorious generals and mullahs have held the reins of power for more than a decade now. And between martial law and Islamisation moves, art has been put on the defensive. The latest outburst of the mullahs is targeted at the visit to Pakistan early next year of pop music cult figures—Michael Jackson and Madonna—for a charity show. They termed the visit as blasphemous and un-Islamic.

But that is only the latest salvo in an unrelenting attack on Pakistan's art scene. The first activity to be hit was theatre, and women could no longer perform because 'dance and obscenity' on the stage were banned. Then painters found themselves unable to display nudes. But artistic activity did not wither in Pakistan.

In fact, theatre actually flowered in the repressive atmosphere. The ingenuity of the playwrights was stretched, leading to intelligent verbal subversiveness. Says playwright and actor Imran Aslam: "There was initial shock and demoralisation when martial law was declared. However, slowly we started conveying without offending."

During the 11 years that martial law lasted, more than 70 dramas were written and produced. Many in Pakistan feel these are among the best to have emerged. In the early martial law days, comedies like Kamal Ahmed Rizvi's *Alif Noon* were telecast, and became instant hits. The stinging satire that lingered beneath missed the censors' scrutiny.

Even classical dance has seen the use of subtle subterfuge. Nighat Chaudhary put up a performance in Karachi depicting the tale of Heer and Ranjha in the Kathak style instead of the traditional romance of Radha and Krishna. And hoodwinked the moral police. For there is much less surveillance when it comes to folk forms of art. A woman photographer sharply commented: "While in other countries, including India, religion is a source of expression in art, in Pakistan it is a social restriction."

But restrictions have not really dampened spirits. There are still a few classical dance exponents left in the country, like Karachi's Bharat Natyam and Odissi expert Sheema Kirmani. At Beacon House dancing school in Karachi, where Nighat teaches, there are about 100 students. Says she: "There is so much talent. It should be tapped."

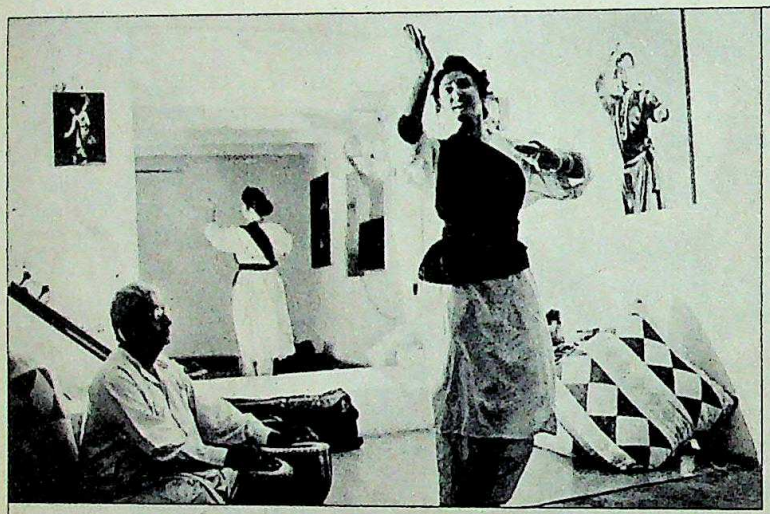
The puritanical pall appears to be deeper when it comes to painting. Anwar Maqsood, known as a 'colour sensualist', is not really at liberty to show what he points. He is forced to display the nude paintings at houses of art lovers. Maqsood says: "Strangely, there is a great demand for acquiring the 'nudes', which could be due to restrictions."

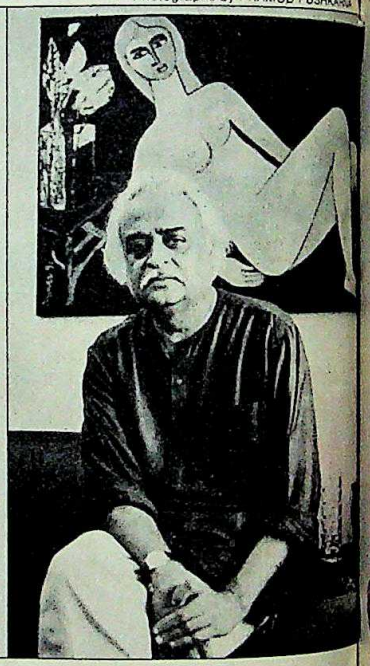
The repressive edicts affected the woman painters differently. According to Sadia Dehlvi, media columnist married to a Pakistani connoisseur, the men turned to calligraphy, but the women held out. Painters like Mubina Zuberi, Saleema Hashmi continued to paint, especially nudes. Says Sadia: "For the women, painting was a cathartic experience, defying both cultural and political repression."

With the coming to power of Benazir Bhutto there was indeed a thaw, but it also took away part of the tension that proved to be a creative spur. The productions did not any more bristle with political insinuations. But artistic activity in Pakistan under Nawaz Sharif has not yet completely freed itself from the clutches of the censors, especially with the influential fundamentalists still calling the shots. Cultural glasnost is still a distant dream in Pakistan, and artistes will have to continue to tax their ingenuity to circumvent the censors.

—KANWAR SANDHU in Pakistan

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA





Cultural glasnost is still a distant dream, and artists will have to continue to tax their ingenuity to circumvent the censors.

Anwar Maqsood (right) and Nighat Chaudhary: resisting repression

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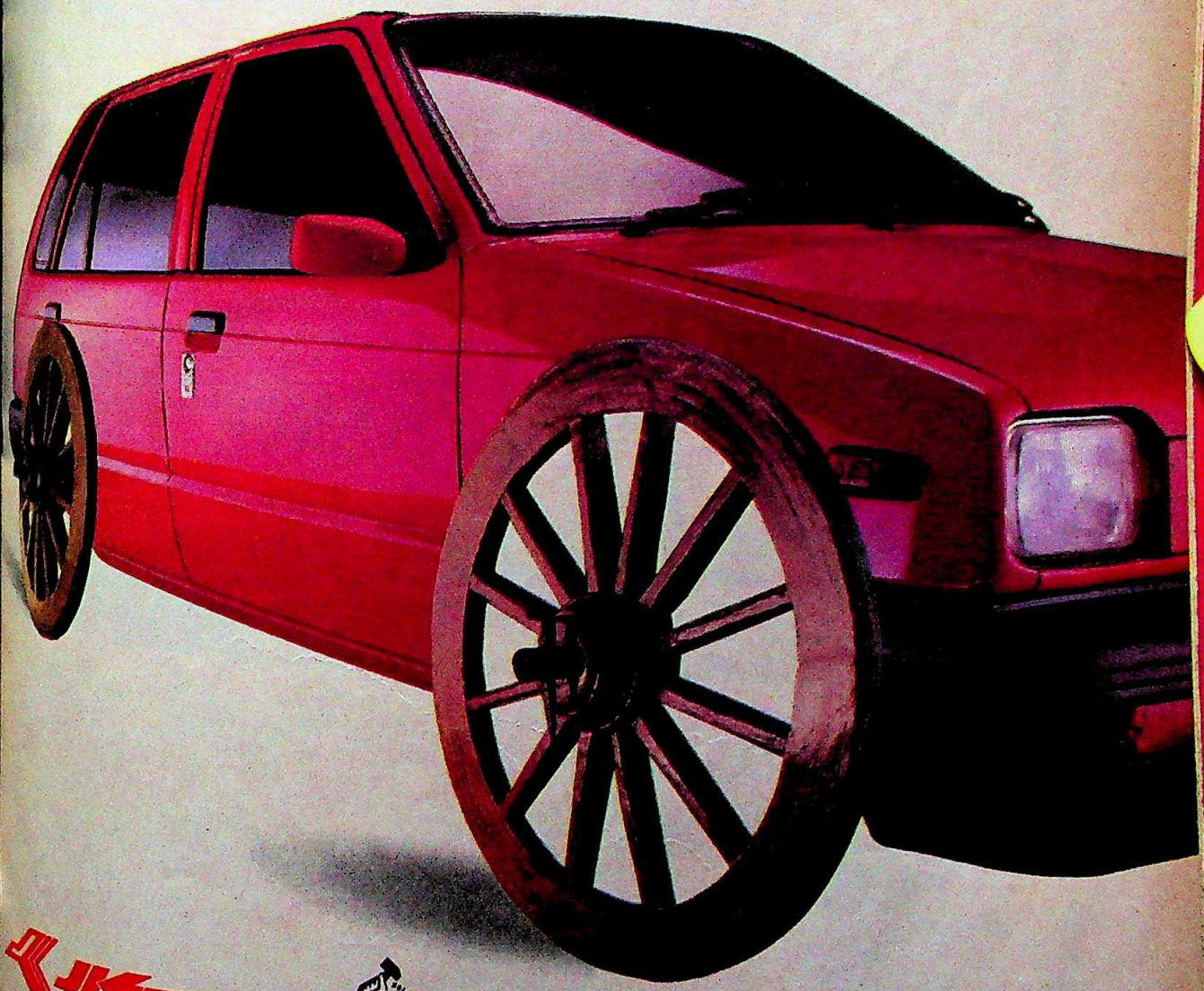

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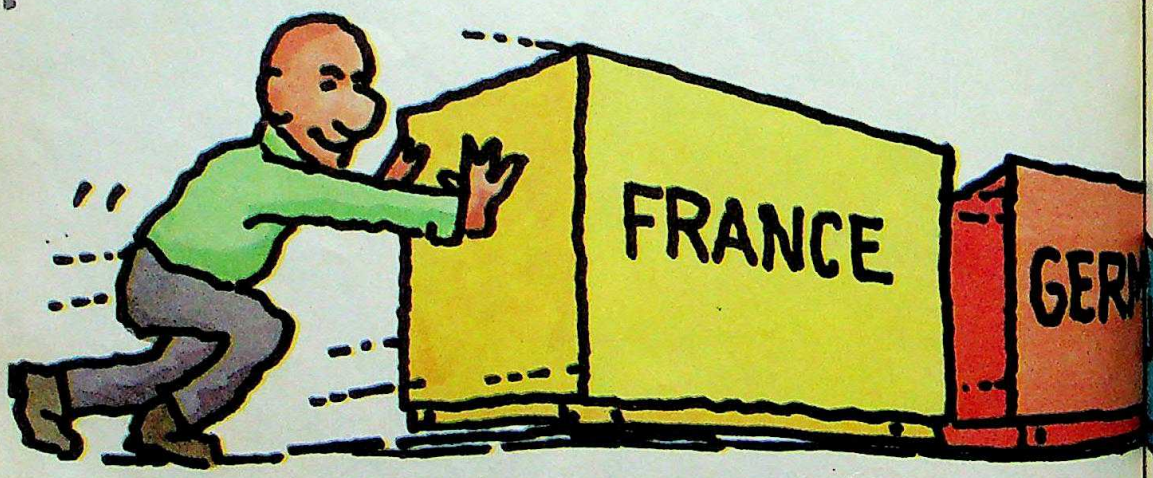

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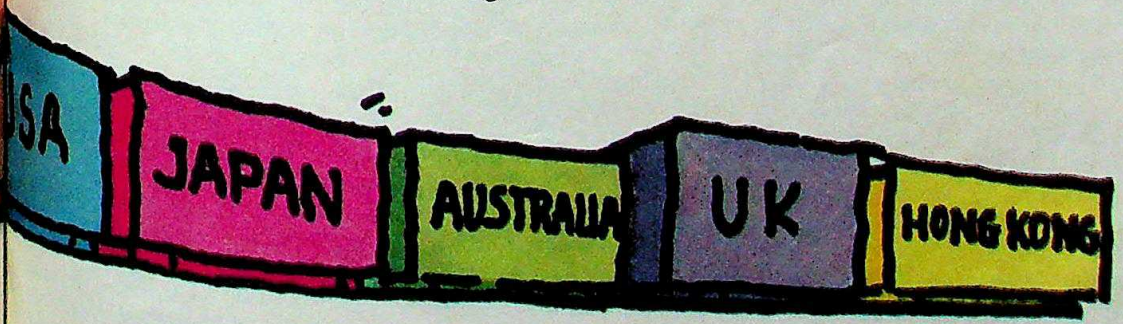

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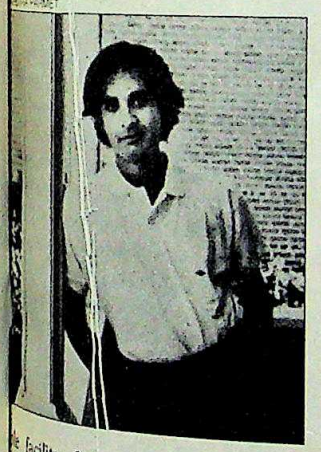
Love and Zen

Evocative prose, little else

THE LADY AND THE MONK: FOUR SEASONS IN KYOTO
by PICO IYER
Alfred A. Knopf
Pages: 340
Price: Rs 572

By SHASHI THAROOR

A UK-born, Oxbridge-educated Californian of Indian descent spends a year in Japan dabbling in Zen, hanging out with wandering westerners and falling in love with an elusive married woman. Since he is a talented travel writer *(Video Nights in Kathmandu)* and an incisive essayist for *Time*, he describes it all in an intriguing, idiosyncratic memoir that leaves the reviewer in several minds—and wishing he had Pico Iyer's envi-



able facility for passing confident judgement on the indefinable.

Iyer's title seems to come from a remark he briefly recounts, a beautifully-told but quite inscrutable story of the attraction between 'a lady and a monk'. The theme recurs: as he portrays the Japan he sees during his sojourn in picturesque Kyoto, Iyer gives us much anecdotal reportage about Americans in quest of the Orient and/or the wisdom of the East. "Not all foreign men are terrible," tells Sachiko. "Two kinds come to Japan: some wanting much money, many girls; some who truly want to understand the Japanese heart." Iyer leaves no doubt about the category he belongs to. This book is not as showy as his last; instead of glittering with brilliance and brittle wit, it is gentler in mood and pace. But it is also a curiously bloodless work, elegant but not moving, skilful but not compelling. The fault lies not so much in what Iyer writes, but in what he omits.

His theme is interesting enough, and the story of his love affair often captivating. Sachiko is a seemingly perfect Japanese housewife and mother who has posters of Sting in her flat, recites 8th century Manyoshu poetry at a Bryan Adams concert and takes a $160-portrait of herself in a sari for her Indian lover. Her adultery is entirely plausible as an act of escape from her duties: "I dream your life-style," she tells Iyer. But the author leaves us bewildered about its outcome: in one scene she decides to give up the temptations he represents; then, we find her cheerfully planning a divorce and travelling abroad with the author. When it comes to the individuals in his book, Iyer is long on analysis, short on explanation. We are given to understand little of his feelings ("I found myself a protagonist in someone else's dream," he writes, having made her, after all, a protagonist in someone else's book). It is worse with his friend Matthew, whose quest for a woman, and a meaning, becomes tiresome primarily due to Iyer's elliptical portrayal.

EXCERPT

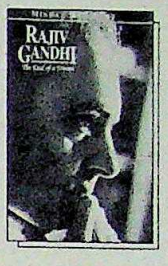
And as the leaves began to fall, I really did begin to feel that something was flowering in Sachiko, as if she really was a kind of sleeping beauty awakened by romance, or at least its distant shadow. And for all her supercompetence as a mother, for all her chic, I could tell hers was a heart ready to take flight and soar out of her control.

And so the reviewer is torn. Pico Iyer writes gracefully and evocatively. But there are too many empty phrases—Japan may be 'a riddle of surface and depth', but which country is not?—and facile paradoxes.

For all his skill, Iyer's lady and monk add up to an inadequate basis for his larger explorations of the duality of modern Japan, a hi-tech land that has preserved its Zen culture and timeless traditions. And for this reason, his book both pleases and fails to satisfy. ■

Fine Portrait

Lucid biography of Rajiv



RAJIV GANDHI: THE END OF A DREAM
by MINHAZ MERCHANT
Viking
Pages: 370
Price: Rs 250

By KHUSHWANT SINGH

IN *My Years With Indira*, P.C. Alexander writes of the scene in the prime minister's house the day after the assassination: "Sonia was holding him tightly and with tears rolling down her cheeks was pleading with him not to agree to be prime minister. Rajiv was kissing her forehead and trying to convince her he had to accept the office as it was his duty to do so."

In some ways, the poignant scene sums up Rajiv's political career. It started with the death of his brother, Sanjay in 1980, but for the reluctant politician the die was finally cast only on October 30, 1984.

In his first two years as prime minister, Rajiv retained the image of a Prince Charming who would wipe out corruption and lead India to the 21st century. Then, blemishes began to appear, and scandals surfaced with sickening regularity, even as he tried to lie his way out of them. Once courteous, he now became arrogant. Unsure of himself, he reshuffled his cabinet every few months. His advisers were a coterie of school buddies with no political commitments. Ram Jethmalani summed up the ruling trinity as a *plane-wallah* (Rajiv), a *paint-wallah* (Arun Nehru), and a *boot polish-wallah* (Arun Singh). But despite the Bofors brouhaha, he remained the country's most popular figure. And had he lived, would have today been prime minister.

It is too early to make a fair assessment of Rajiv as a politician. The hosannas, the posthumous Bharat Ratna, the media's sob-stuff make objective analysis difficult. Even so, Merchant's biography is not a quickie. He has been at it for some years, collecting data and interviewing people. He has done a heroic job by producing a lucid, readable book, about the best on the subject so far. ■

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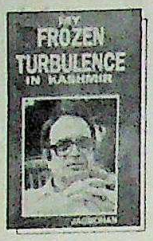
Half Truths

Valuable, but biased account



MY FROZEN TURBULENCE IN KASHMIR
by JAGMOHAN
Allied
Pages: 723
Price: Rs 275

By KULDIP NAYAR

WHEN a book becomes a cause, it is an exercise in self-righteousness. This is what has spoiled Jagmohan's book. Otherwise, it is a scholarly work which has some authentic, rare, inside information.

Jagmohan's efforts to justify every act of his is at best one part of the story, if not his side of the story. His defence of the dismissal of Farooq Abdullah in July 1984 and the installation of G.M. Syed as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir runs thin. It was an open secret that Mrs Gandhi had decided to oust Farooq long before the actual dismissal took place. She suspected him of having links with "anti-national forces" in Punjab. Defections were engineered and that explains why all the 12 defectors were made cabinet ministers. The Centre did not impose Governor's rule even at Jagmohan's bidding because the members who broke away from Farooq did so on the promise of office. If Jagmohan felt so strongly on the issue, as is evident from his book, he should have resigned.

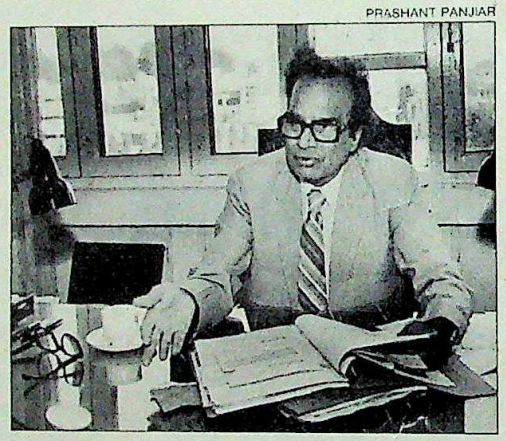
The author's second stint as governor was indeed controversial. If Mufti Mohammed Syed, then home minister, recalled him after appointing him there must have been something amiss in his style of functioning. The assassination of Maulvi Farooq who, despite several requests by the Mufti, was not taken into "protective custody", is said to have been the last straw on the Mufti's back. Jagmohan is not justified in saying the Mufti should have advised him "in writing". As an administrator, he should know that all orders cannot be in black and white.

But it is the chapter on Article 370 that is the weakest. Jagmohan argues the Central Government was not able to do in Kashmir what it could in the rest of the country. This is not true. The Centre has always ruled the state according to its own beliefs. Had Article 370 been followed in letter and spirit, the country would probably not have faced today's crisis. That the article limits India's sovereignty is not the point at stake. The state acceded to the Union on an understanding consecrated by Article 370. Jagmohan can justifiably say the accession was irrevocable. But he cannot say partial accession should have been treated as full accession. Still, an Indian law can be extended to the state through a resolution by the state Assembly, as has been done in the past, often surreptitiously.

I will recommend the book for reading not because I agree with Jagmohan's arguments but because he has thrown light on certain happenings which, if avoided, may have changed the course of Kashmir's history. Had he been less angry, he would have gone down better. ■

Jagmohan: self-righteous defence

PRASHANT PANJIAR

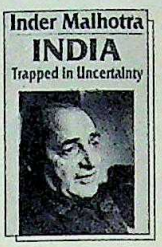


EXCERPT

The disinformation deluge did not emanate from a single source. It had quite a few points of origin. The principal source of the deluge was Rajiv Gandhi and his coterie. Later on, another source—George Fernandes and his associates—made their contribution. Yet another was the unimaginable ignorance about the fundamental reality of Kashmir.

Tacky Fare

A disappointing quickie



INDIA: TRAPPED IN UNCERTAINTY
by INDER MALHOTRA
UBS Publishers
Pages: 161
Price: Rs 125

By DILIP BOBB

THE most illustrative aspect of Inder Malhotra's political pedigree is the cover illustration—a large, artfully-posed portrait of the author. Such self-indulgence is not the norm in Indian publishing (unless you are as sexy as Shobha De) but then neither is this book. Malhotra's last book, a definitive biography of Indira Gandhi, was a critical success, mainly for the solid research and analysis that went into its making. In contrast, the title of his latest offering says more about the author than his output.

The temptation that attends authors who make an impact with their first book—to capitalise on the name or fame—is precisely what Malhotra seems to have succumbed to. The cover blurb even plugs this as a sequel to his earlier bestseller, though it is quick to disclaim this as a 'quickie'. Malhotra confesses he was "not at all keen to write this book" but gave in to 'gentle pressure' from friends. One suspects the 'friends' are his publishers, keen to propel this book into the tailwind of his earlier success.

Malhotra's true confessions in the introduction include the fact that the book was written in a hurry—and shows. To produce this slim and easily-written volume, he has obviously not utilised the sources, research and time that went into his first book.

The overall impression is of an author sitting at his typewriter banging out a chapter a day with the publisher sitting nervously at his elbow. Though Malhotra tries to provide some sort of sequence—the Rajiv years, the brief interludes by V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar and the ascension of P.V. Narasimha Rao to the prime minister's throne—the lack of in-depth analysis and insight and information is an insult to Malhotra's lofty reputation.

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Books

THE FILMS OF MERCHANT IVORY BY ROBERT EMMET LONG (Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York). Commemorating the 25-year tie-up of Ismail Merchant, James Ivory and Ruth Prabhvala. Mini biographies and their movies' analysis. A must for film buffs.

IMMORTALITY BY MILAN KUNDERA (Faber-

Rs 65). On the edge of post-modernism, the writer plays literary games and gives doses of philosophy.

AMERICAN PSYCHO BY BRET EASTON ELLIS (Picador; Rs 110). The controversial novel about a psychopathic yuppie who earns hand-over-fist in the day and practices perversions at night.

MILES: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY MILES DAVIS WITH QUINCY TROUPE (Picador; Rs 129) A must for jazz buffs, the story of the man with the golden horn, a jazz giant.

Music

USE YOUR ILLUSION I & II (By Guns n' Roses. Bremen Music. Rs 45 each). This daring double-album release is marked by mayhem and blistering guitar work. Still, *Use Your Illusion* is worth listening to because of its high-density hysteria.

Art

KANWAL KRISHNA—TRAVELOGUE OF AN ARTIST: An Exhibition of Water Colours of Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan and the North-West Frontier (Habiart; New Delhi; October 26 to November 9). With so much contemporary art tumbling out of the mushrooming galleries, it's a pleasant break to feast one's eye on the tranqullity of these figures and landscapes of the upper Himalayas done by the octogenarian painter 40 years ago.

THE ARTIST AS TEACHER (Gallerie Ganesha; New Delhi; October 20 to November 12). It's the day of the guru. For its second anniversary the gallery has put together quite a worthy show with works of painters like Ganesh Haloi, K.K. Hebbar, B.C. Sanyal, K.S. Kulkarni, Bimal Dasgupta, A. Ramachandran, Paritosh Sen and Kanwal Krishna.

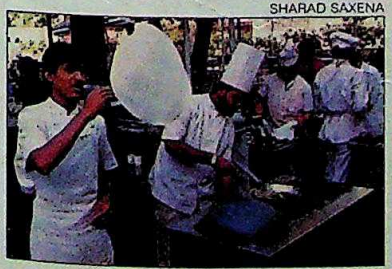
GANESH IN HIS MANY MOODS (Gallery Espace; New Delhi; October 24 to November 3). Ganesh, the remover of all obstacles, bewitches not only the local artist but the foreign one as well. Using polyester resin, Sigrun Srivastav has sculpted the elephant god with a touch of abstraction. The hues of amber, electric blue and springy greens enhance the aureole.

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY RABIN MONDAL (Cymroza; Bombay; October 9 to October 26). Featuring 40-odd works by the Calcutta-based artist, the exhibition displays Mondal's passion for re-creating ordinary human figures and faces. Mondal, whose work of late has been on the decline, manages to sustain the viewer's interest with the innovative use of unusual materials like acrylic on board. He also works in mixed media.

Food

FOOD PLAZA (Hotel Janpath, New Delhi). The open-air plaza offers a choice of five cuisines—Malayalee, Goan, Chinese, Mughlai, and stuffed parathas, aloo-chanas and curd from Kapil Dev's Bhojan. The best time to visit the multi-cuisine mall is undoubtedly the evening hour when the band is in attendance. The dozen stalls give it the air of a school fete but it's costlier.

SHARAD SAXENA



Video

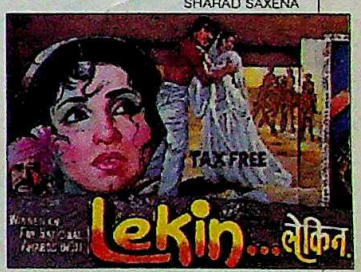
ANOTHER YOU (Director: Maurice Phillips. Starring: Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder). The wacky duo of *See No Evil, Hear No Evil* is back. Pryor as a conman teams up with Wilder as a pathological liar. The story-line, about a two-timing businessman caught in a financial scam, is weak. The odd couple fail to amuse.

DEFENDING YOUR LIFE (Director: Albert Brooks. Starring: Albert Brooks and Meryl Streep). Another life-after-death film. Set in the impossibly-clean Judgement City, where people are judged before being sent to Heaven or Earth. The story: an adman, Daniel (Brooks) falls in heavenly love with Julia (Streep). While Brooks occasionally sparkles, Streep is a total wash-out.

Movies

LEKIN (Director: Gulzar. Starring: Dimple Kapadia, Vinod Khanna). Presented by Lata Mangeshkar, the film's about the be-

SHARAD SAXENA



witching Dimple who traverses time. Watchable.

Theatre

LEND ME A TENOR (Director: Barry John; Kamani, Delhi). Ken Ludwig's comedy set in the '30s. Superstar tenor Tito Morelli's US debut runs aground as farce and slapstick befall him. Hilarious.

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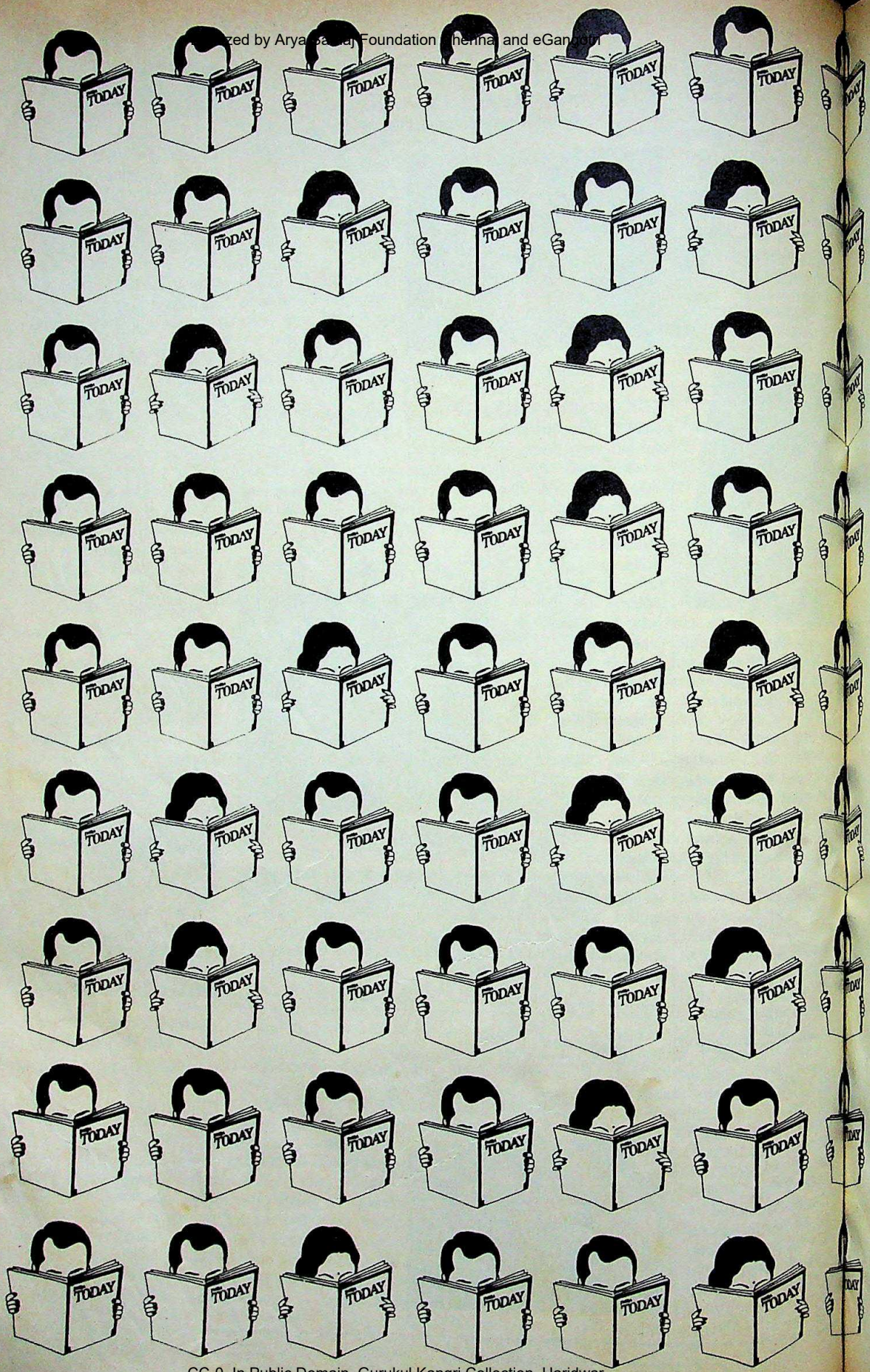

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Over 50 lakh, according to NRS IV.

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India Today	— 22,18,000
No. 2	— 15,98,000

More readers among Officers/ Executives/ Businessmen/ Traders:

India Today	— 14,11,000
All business publications put together*	— 5,79,000

More upper income readers (Rs. 4001+):

India Today	— 13,72,000
No. 2	— 11,30,000

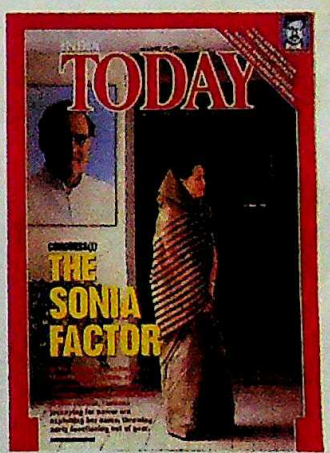
More readers in the top Socio-Economic class (A1,A2):

India Today	— 20,72,000
No. 2	— 16,66,000

More women readers:

India Today	— 10,72,000
All women's publications put together*	— 8,01,000

All these facts just prove one thing. When it comes to English publications, India Today leads the rest.



INDIA TODAY

LEADERSHIP IN READERSHIP

*English language publications featured in NRS IV

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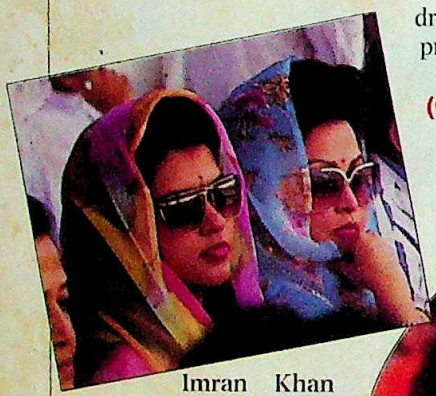
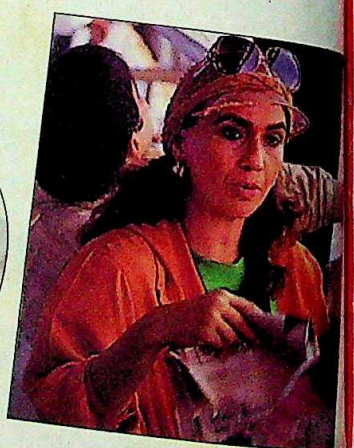
THE SHARJAH SIDE-SHOW

MOST of them think that slips are something you pick up in the lingerie department at Harrods and that maiden overs are something to do with lost virginity. But Sharjah wouldn't be Sharjah without them. For the motley mixture of ageing film stars, nubile nymphets, socialites, politicians and their entourage from the subcontinent, Sharjah has become an important stopover on the celebrity circuit. In fact, the glamour brigade in the VIP enclosures, especially invited by Arab impresario **Abdulrahman Bukhatir**, often overshadows the action out on the middle. British commentator **Henry Blofeld** spent more time describing the outsized earrings on display than he did the state of play.

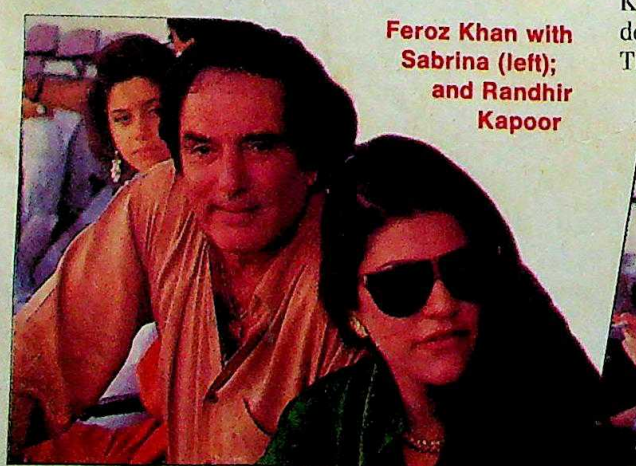
For the Sharjah side-show, there's only one rule. If you've got it, flaunt it. Thus, Bombay socialite **Parmeshwar Godrej** showed up in hot pants, proving that a mirage in the desert isn't just a cliche. Normally, however, the dress code is pretty predictable. As **Imran Khan** says: "Massive orange glasses, three-inch make-up and bright red lipstick." The only other requirement is to keep a mascara'd eye out for the television cameras in case you get caught scratching an unbecoming part of the anatomy.



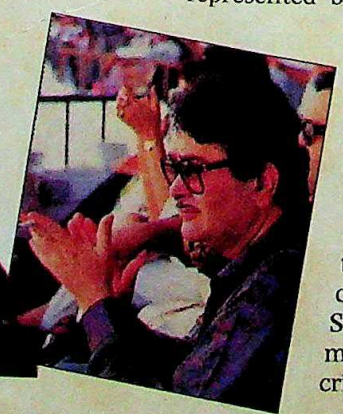


(Clockwise from left) Scindias; Pataudis; Godrej; Garewal: hooked

While this year brought Bukhatir's usual galaxy of falling stars, there were some unusual dim clusters as well. **Anju Mahendru**, the sultry siren of yesteryear, looked positively uncomfortable sitting cheek by jowl with old flame, **Sir Garfield Sobers**. Were any of the emotional embers rekindled? "After 20 years? You must be joking," retorted Mahendru. Next to her was the languid **Simi Garewal**, a Sharjah regular. His favourite cricket star: **Sachin Tendulkar**. If that seemed a bit like cradle-snatching, there was Feroz **Khan** with **Sabrina**, almost half his age, whom he describes as "more than a wife. She is my sweetheart." The Kapoor clan was thinly (no pun intended) represented by a paunchy Randhir. Union Minister and BCCI chief Madhavrao **Scindia** came with family and preferred the players' gallery to sitting with has-beens in VIP boxes. And rounding things off were the adman's favourite couple, **Tiger Pataudi** and **Sharmila Tagore**. What more could any discerning cricket fan want!



Feroz Khan with Sabrina (left); and Randhir Kapoor



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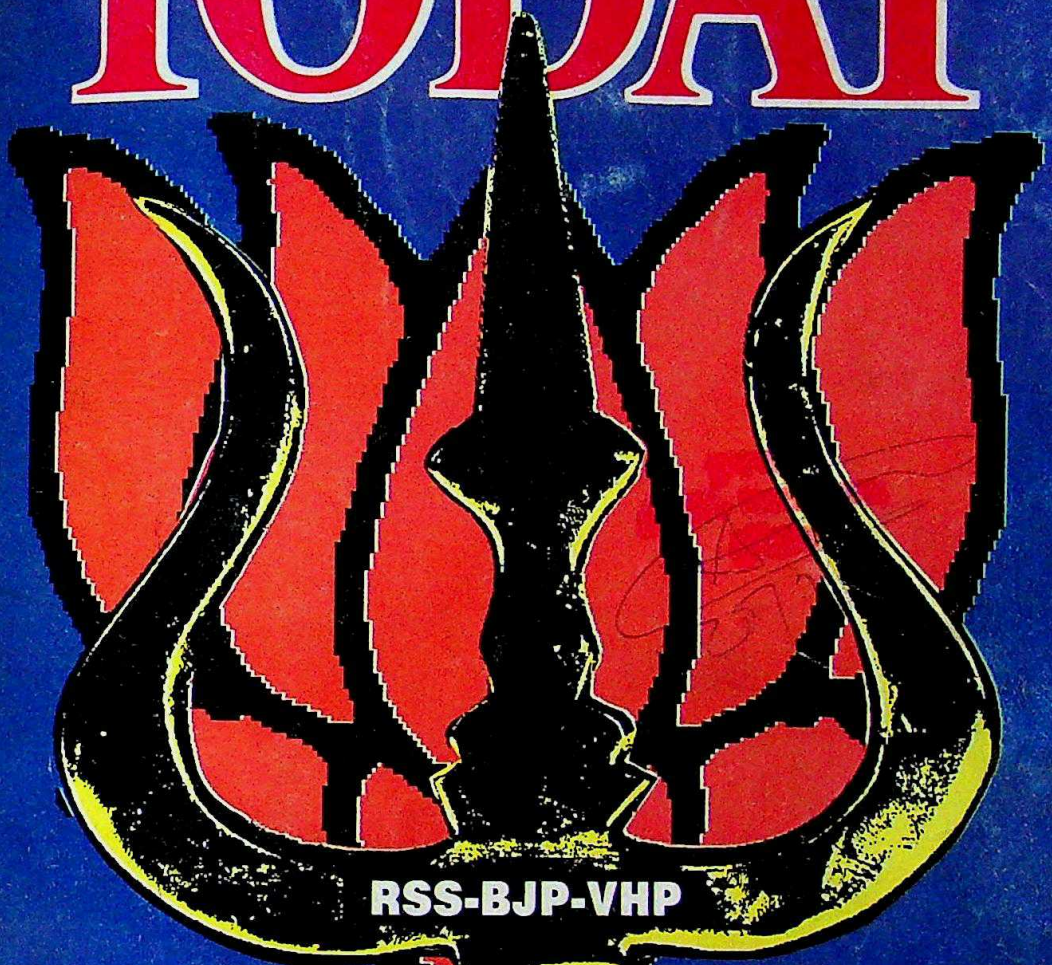
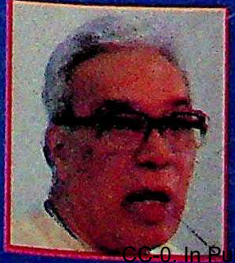
NOVEMBER 30, 1991

S.B. CHAVAN: CHAOS AT HOME
EARTHQUAKE: RELIEF RIP-OFF
OOTY: FILMDOM'S NEW HAVEN



HINDU DIVIDED FAMILY

Once a vote-winning card, Ayodhya now opens up fissures in the combine, and creates tensions about its future line of action.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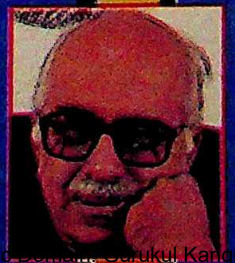
RSS


L.K. ADVANI
BJP

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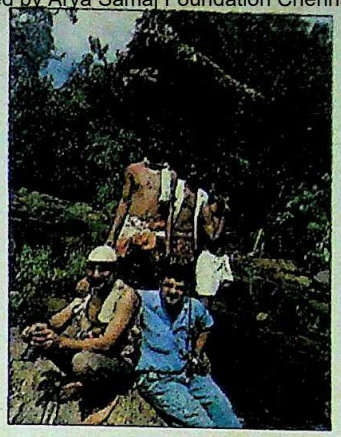
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

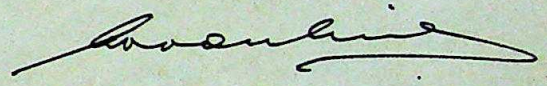
THOUGH the primary aim of a newsmagazine is tracking news and making sense of it, every now and then we take the less-trodden path to do that off-beat story that brings both pleasure and a sense of satisfaction. When our Trivandrum Correspondent ANAND VISWANATHAN *suggested a story on the bamboo reed-cutters of Idukki district in eastern Kerala, none of us imagined we would land something quite so colourful and exciting. In the event, it took Anand and Principal Photographer* PRAMOD PUSHKARNA *five days to do the story. They divided the story into three regions, and operated out of two base camps—Kothamangalam and Cochin in Ernakulam district.*



Pramod and Anand in Kerala

They spent five days exploring the arduous yet quaint lives of the reed-cutters. Besides travelling by jeeps, rafts and country boats, they also spent two days trekking with the reed-cutters over difficult, slippery terrain. Each morning they would set out before dawn for the foothills, from where they would start trekking. The uphill treks, through difficult jungle paths which were often blocked by fallen trees, brought out the drawbacks of a sedentary, urban existence. At 84 kg and asthmatic, Anand was particularly discomfitted on the steep inclines, and during one trek panicked when he discovered he'd left his inhaler behind. But he heeded Pramod's advice that the fresh mountain air and some exercise would do him no harm. And to his joy discovered that for the first time in eight years, he'd walked as much as 14 km without an inhaler.

In the stunningly picturesque surroundings, they had their moments of excitement. While crossing a swollen rivulet, Pushkarna slipped and fell from a rock and had to be pulled out by the vigilant mountain folk. Another time he capsized while taking pictures from an unmanned raft, and was hard put to swim ashore. They ate with the reed-cutters sharing their plantain and boiled tapioca, and spent time in their tree-houses. By the end of it both had blisters on their feet, shoes not worth the wearing and creaking joints. But as Anand says: "It was five days of fun and work, and we enjoyed the rustic life-style—a good change from the regular news and political stories we keep doing."

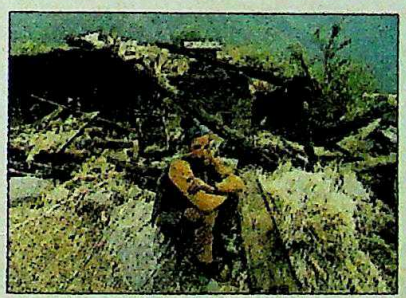


IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Hindu Divided Family

The recent events in Ayodhya, showed the schisms in the *sangh parivar*, with the RSS making peace. An update on where the BJP now stands and what its future plans are.

COVER STORY 22



Relief Rip-off

In Uttarkashi, earthquake victims are yet to receive succour. With relief operations reduced to a mockery and the winter setting in, the survivors' nightmare continues.

SPECIAL REPORT 165

Celluloid Charms

With usual locales like Kashmir closed for film makers, Ooty has become the ideal alternative. Business is booming but the threat of commercialisation looms large.

CINEMA 153

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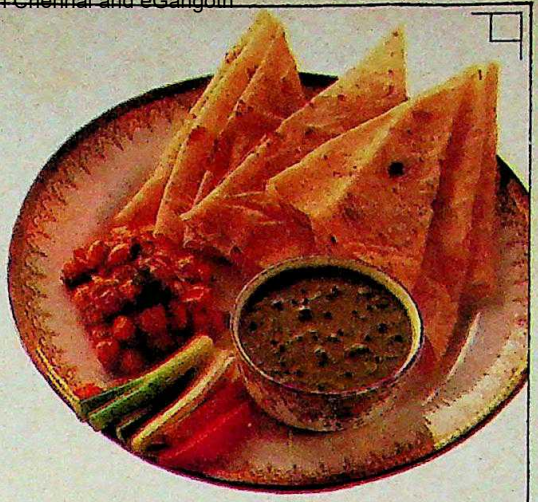

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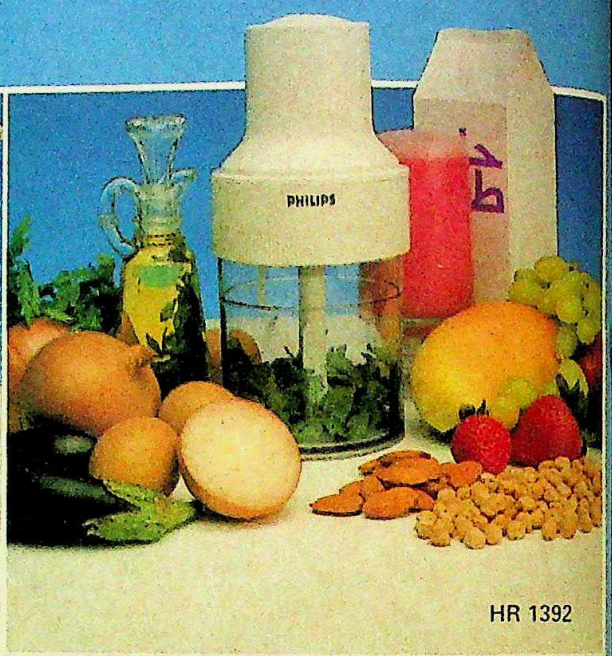

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BLOWN OVER

Best batting line-up or best batting foul-up ("A Sharjah Diary", November 15)? The Pakistanis, with their lethal bowling, took the wind out of our willows in the finals.

SANDEEP EDWARD RAO
Howrah

DEPRESSING PLIGHT

As a first-generation Indian national of British origin, I found your article ("The Dying of a Dream", October 31) interesting, if somewhat depressing. While perhaps not totally appropriate, it is worth mentioning that the British Government has restricted the right of abode in that country to only those persons whose fathers or grandfathers were born in the UK or were citizens of that country.

DOUGLAS SHEPHERD
Bombay

■ As an Anglo-Indian, I was pleased to see that the plight of our dying race has not been ignored, as in the past. Till 1947, most first-generation Anglo-Indians were born of white fathers who belonged to the lowest social class among the British. And their Indian mothers were servants, prostitutes or belonged to other low castes. Therefore their offspring were illegitimate, as well as handicapped with regard to education, a stable childhood, and financial abilities.

SANDY LALL
Kent, UK

■ The report incorrectly says that I retired as an assistant commissioner of excise. I retired as a deputy commissioner of excise.

H.E. CHRISTENSEN
McCluskiegunj

BLOODY PRESCRIPTION

Your report ("Radical Recipe", October 31) may provoke many frustrated arthritic patients to drink their blood. It is true that a scientific mind must be open to new, even radical ideas. But such ideas are usually an extrapolation of documented knowledge. Dr Gupta's approach is wholly unrelated to any factual information and hence should be regarded as fantasy.

DR PRAKASH PISPATI
Bombay

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Mark Tully has done well to expose the brown sahibs and the continued imperialism of the West ("The New Colonialism", October 31). However, he seems to bend over backwards a little too much. While it is natural for every person to feel superior about something, they should be careful not to be arrogant.

S. LAKSHMIPATHI
Rajahmundry

■ The most visible aspects of the new brand of colonialism in India are the IAS-run governments, and the dominance of English in administration, education, politics and journalism. In fact INDIA TODAY is also a symbol of this new colonialism.

MURLIDHAR PAHOJA
Faridabad

The earthquake in Uttarkashi has finally focused attention on the engineering, construction and safety of the Tehri Dam.

G. GANGULY
Mahanagar

India's batting potential exists only on paper. And our bowling is also very poor. The Indian team lacks fighting spirit and always buckles under pressure.

C.R. WALIMBE
Shivpuri

WE ARE NOT TO BLAME

While all the developing countries had some praiseworthy things to say about India, all the western developed countries made remarks that varied from constructive criticism to sheer ignorance about the country ("How the World Sees India", October 15). If, despite the festivals of India held abroad and years of diplomatic ties with the country, people are unaware of what India is all about, there is something essentially wrong with the people of Europe and North America.

VIJAY NELLORE
Belair, US

■ What we Indians think of ourselves and our country is just as important as what the rest of the world thinks of us. It is all right to assimilate the best of western culture, but not at the cost of abandoning our own traditions. Without respecting ourselves first, how can we expect the rest of the world to respect us and appreciate our achievements?

V.K. SHASTRI
Rochester, US

■ The respect Indian professionals evoke in the US and Europe does not quite translate into recognition of India's achievements. Indian bureaucrats and politicians must seriously think about why President George Bush insists on giving most-favoured-nation status to communist China while ignoring similar requests from democratic India.

S. TADIKONDA
Tampa, US

■ I would like to stress that the views expressed in the article were the personal views of Jim Maxwell, vice-president and director for south-east Asia, Business International, and do not reflect Business International's attitude towards current developments in India. We are greatly

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encouraged by the recent policy initiatives of the Indian Government and are pleased to report that a number of our multinational corporate clients are reviewing prospects for investment in India.

Hong Kong — WILLIAM HENDERSON, *Managing Director, Asia/Pacific Business International*

NOT ALONE

You have stated that the US-based Texas Instruments is the only company which has set up a high-speed link near Bangalore ("No Easy Way", October 15). But Hindustan Aeronautics Limited too has a tie-up with British Aerospace to jointly develop software for the international market. For this, we use a satellite link to gain access to IBM mainframes in the UK.

Bangalore — K.H. PRAHLAD

BAN THEM FOR GOOD

The LTTE ideologue Anton Balasingham has some nerve threatening India ("Our image has been damaged", October 15). The LTTE should be banned from India. Public sympathy for them in Tamil Nadu, as claimed by Balasingham, is a myth that was exploded in the recent elections.

Applecross, Australia — S.T. ARASU

More Ajit dialogues: *"Cut off his hands and dip them in paint. The police will catch him red-handed."*

◆

"Boss, Tiger has cut the telephone cord!" "Lily, this is a cordless telephone."

Lucknow — RAJAT BAIJAL

WHAT IS THE POINT?

You have discussed the Places of Worship Bill ("Time for Restraint", October 15). But will the lands that have been taken over by state and Central governments since 1947 from Hindu temples be handed back to the temples? If not, what kind of secularism are you talking about?

Durham, US — K. RAJALAKSHMI

NOT AS A RESPONSE

Alpha, Beta and Theta were not in response to Usha following Polar's strategy ("Business Briefs", July 15). In fact they were a continuance of our position, and were launched at the start of the Polar theme campaign. Surely if we had responded to Usha's new strategy, there would have been a change in our campaign.

Calcutta — JAYSHREE SUNDAR, Lintas

CLARIFICATIONS

■ *In "Carping Over Carpets" (November 15), Vinay Kumar Modi's name was incorrectly written as Virendra Kumar Modi.*

■ *In "The Coming Bonanza" (October 31), the photograph captioned Bob Simpson was not his.*

The error is regretted. —*Editor*

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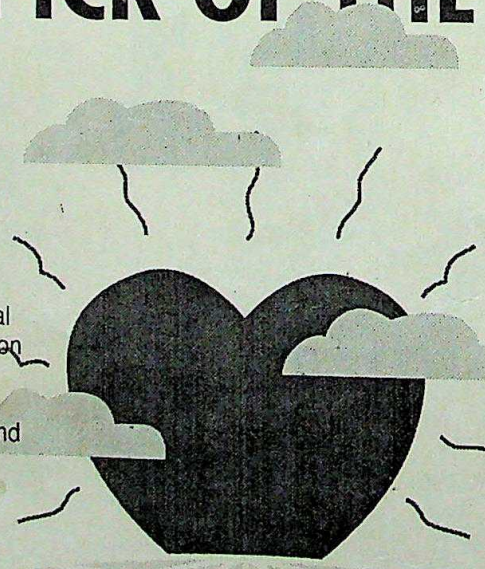

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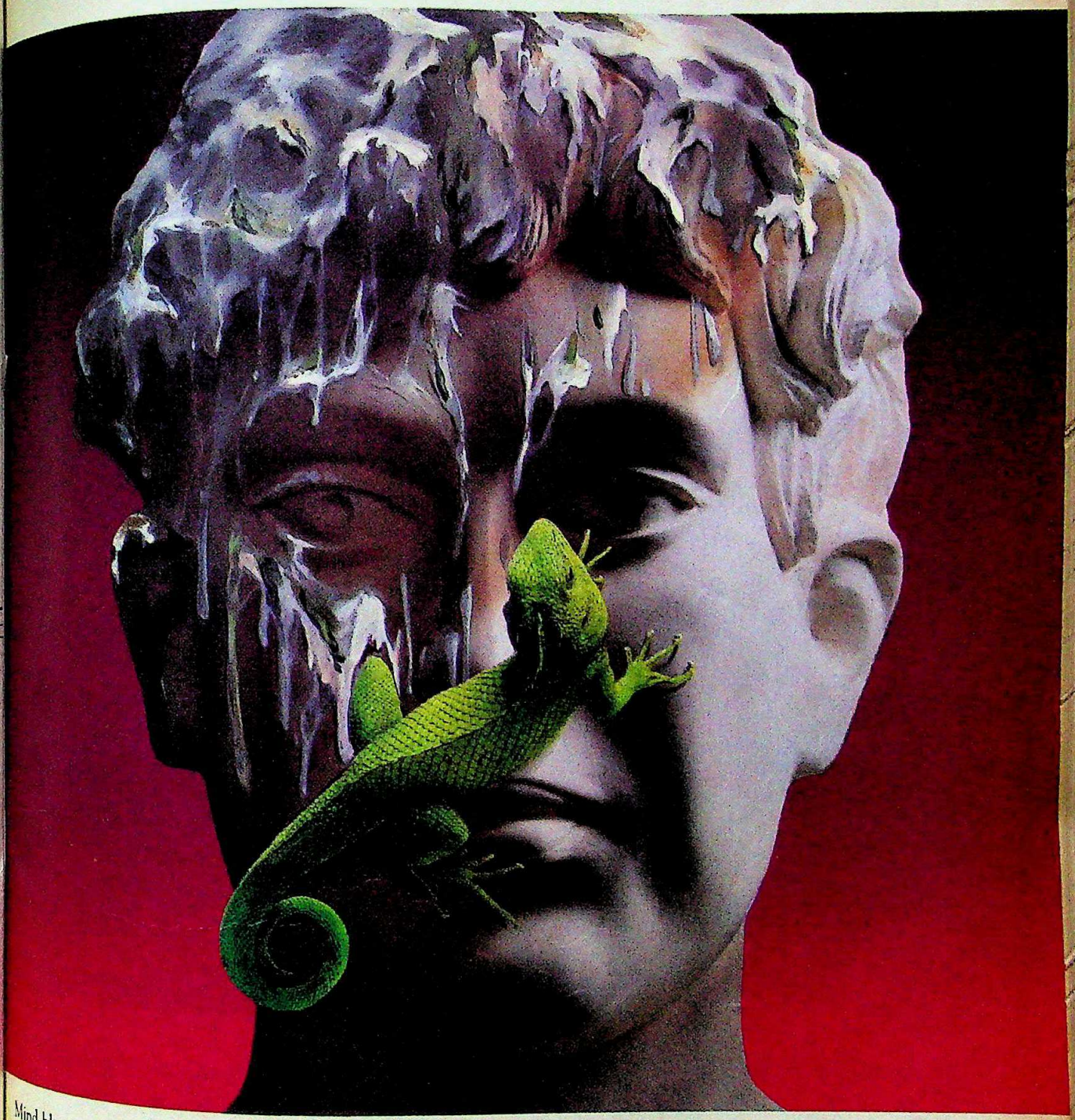

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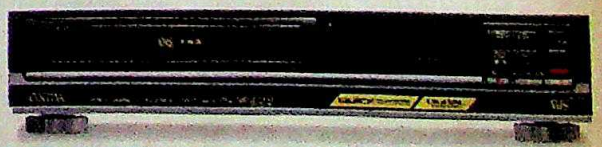

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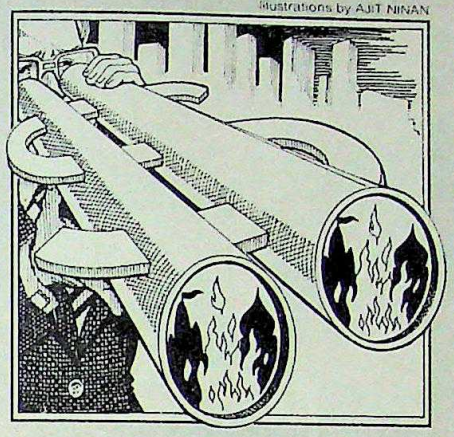
Dangerous Revival

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN



TO actually encourage a genie that has been foolishly uncorked instead of coaxing it back into the bottle, can prove a fatal manoeuvre. For eventually, in its mindless violence, the genie will devour all. The recent replay at Ayodhya of last year's storming-police firing drama, the attack on the fact-finding team that went there, and the resultant bedlam is yet another stark reminder of the dangerous slide Indian politics is taking. Not only is religion increasingly becoming the fulcrum on which politics turns, but at times it seems the distinction between the law-breaker and the law-enforcer is blurring.

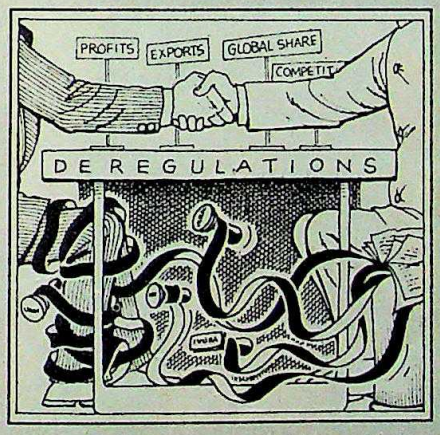
Even the immediate dangers of this extend far beyond the apparent. At a time when India is trying to establish a global presence, and trying to attract foreign investment, such shenanigans can be expensive. Potential investors—wary of India's reputation for tardiness and of its bureaucracy—are not likely to be encouraged by the vision of wild-eyed fanatics breaking into masjids, braving lathi-charges and police firing. For investors, stability is of the essence. And a bubbling communal cauldron is hardly stable.

Authorities, at both the state and Central levels, need to take cognisance of this. They must let it be known that incidents, such as the recent fracas at Ayodhya are the aberration and not the norm. And this clear signal has to be beamed not through the mouthing of platitudes, but through the taking of unambiguous action.

Yet this is exactly what political leaders are always unwilling to do. Consumed by the imperatives of electoral politics, they prevaricate on every issue, keep all their options open, and are ready to flog every opening for all the votes it can fetch. Predictably, situations deteriorate. And since vote calculations change from time to time, policy acquires an inconsistent hue.

For the BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh, the dilemma is particularly severe. In keeping with the norms of enlightened governance, it has to condemn what it once actively encouraged. And in keeping with these norms, it has to bring to heel the Hindutva cadres on whose revivalist shoulders it stormed to victory. To draw strength to do this, it should remember that in the Indian republics of yore, the king, once he ascended the throne, relinquished all ties of family, faction, caste and creed. This is one revivalist lesson it would do well to imbibe.

Piecemeal Measures



WHOM do you admire more, Karl Marx or Maynard Keynes? The person who showed us the way to state-controlled defeatism, or state-controlled deficit? Or both?

Ask the Government to answer any of the above. Chances are, you will get a 'yes' for all three questions—and as an unwelcome bonus, barely suppressed contempt for asking the obvious. By following what they preached, they will tell you, "we are ensuring our survival, and clawing for our own little footnotes in history, turning inefficiency into ibids and fallacy into fact". This is India's new-look priesthood. They have changed their robes but, unfortunately, not their habits.

This is the tragedy of Indian economic policy. A story of self-inflicted defeat and deficit. Instead of cutting its expenditure, the Government is shifting the onus onto collecting more revenue to shield that expenditure. And it doesn't seem to be working. Last fortnight, the Government talked of combined customs and excise target shortfalls of Rs 5,000 crore for 1990-91. If it can't bridge that, it will simply print more money. This will shoot the budget deficit to hell.

Having failed to tighten its own belt, it wants others to do it. This strategy—on since April—was reinforced last month, with the credit squeeze and a hike in interest rates. It is supposed to reduce inflation. But it has, according to figures available for July, only reduced industrial and manufacturing output—both indices show negative growth rates.

That is the result of trying to survive in a high-cost economy, with everybody but the Government paying the price. Other 'liberal' approaches, such as wooing multinationals and NRIs, are poorly judged. It isn't a bad move, but the mandarins are ignoring one fact: multinationals are keener on the Indian market, not on an export option. And NRI money is a short-term bridge to international solvency. To get around both, the Government must encourage Indian industry to export. And the way to do it is bring down the cost of the economy so that in the long run, exporting becomes a better option than selling at home—this will apply equally to multinationals. It would also help if the Government cut red tape for exports like it plans to do for imports. No amount of IMF loans will bridge this gap. But try telling that to our priesthood, which waves red tape like a crusading banner, and confuses bravado with bluster.

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This is a true story.
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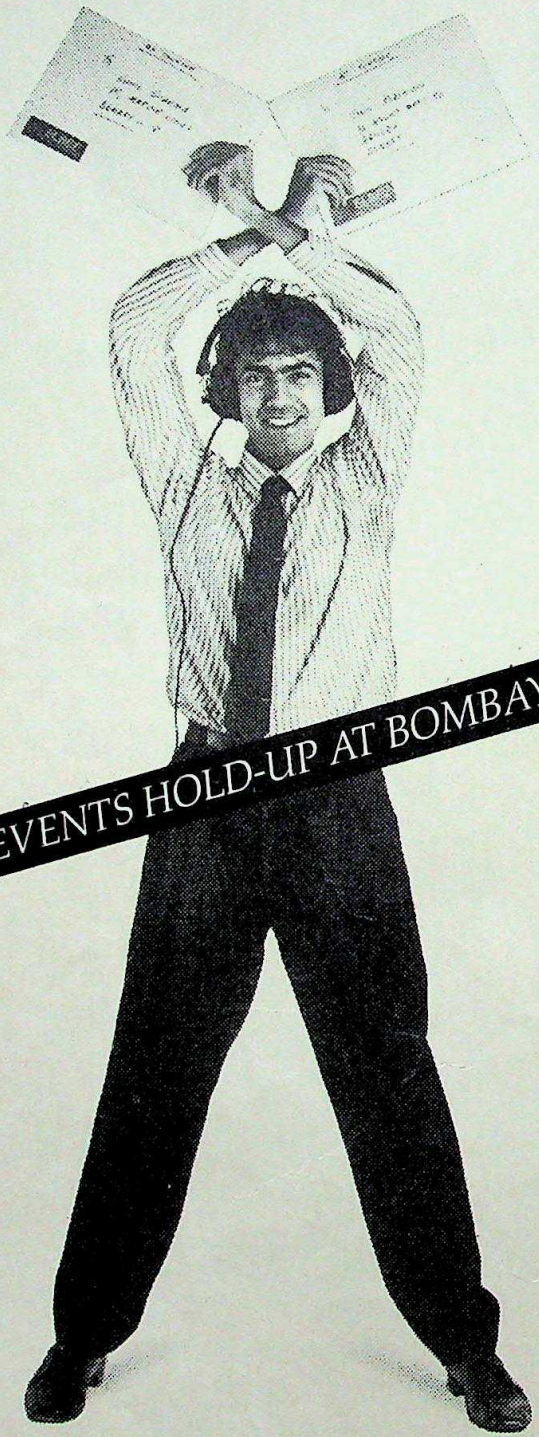

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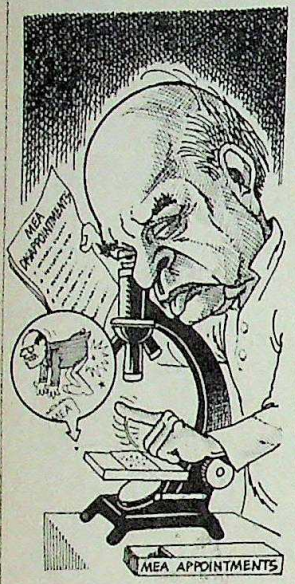
Methodical Moves

● The prime minister might not make any spectacular changes in the Government. But there is still a slow relentless movement. Even the most exclusive Ministry of External



Affairs (MEA) has finally come under his microscope.

Narasimha Rao's first move in his old charge came when he took J.N. Dixit, high commissioner to Pakistan, instead of Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey, to Harare. This clearly indicated that Dixit would succeed the retiring Dubey in end-November. Then, an entire list of critical ambassador-level postings proposed by the ministry was rejected.

Rao prefers high calibre but low-key officers for slots in the subcontinent. So S.K. Lambah may be pulled out of San Francisco prematurely and sent to Islamabad. And Pushkar Johri might now go to Thimpu, rather than to Dhaka. For the more coveted western slots, Rao is looking for people capable of projecting abroad the country's investment and economic potential.

Meanwhile, traditional influence-peddling for postings has become more difficult. There are very few MEA officials Rao does not know well. This has recently broken the heart of many an IFS officer eyeing the comforts of the opulent Occident.

War Within

● The recent Indo-Pak seminar to foster bilateral amity might have succeeded to some extent. While the generals on both sides were optimistic, there seemed little amity on the Indian side.

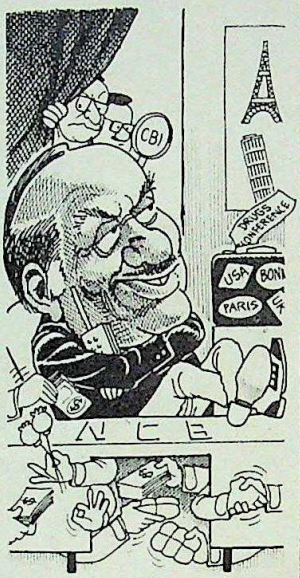
Ram Jethmalani observed that India had always been a tolerant society. After all, the Pandavas were accommodating enough to share one wife. This raised the hackles of journalist Mrinal Pande. She laid into the hapless lawyer by quoting a character in the Mahabharat who had pointed out, "If the *shastras* say this, then the *shastras* are wrong." This demolished an apologetic Jethmalani's tolerance argument. But it also showed that while Indo-Pak friendship was a

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

possibility, intra-Indian amity might be more elusive.

Role Reversal

● The tables seem to have been turned. The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), India's apex drug controlling agency, is now the one at the receiving end. Two of its dep-



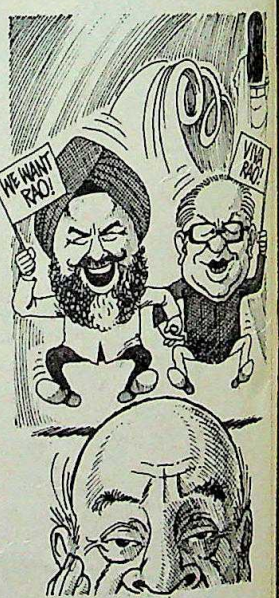
uty directors, three assistant directors and seven investigation officers are facing CBI cases. The accused officials were raided by the CBI before the cases were made out. Ironically, not all the corruption cases took place when the officials were with the NCB. How such officers got posted to a law enforcement agency is a mystery.

One section in the Finance Ministry, which oversees the NCB, blames the authorities for negligence in appointments. Another suspects drug lords. With a $20-million grant from the UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control, the NCB sticks to conferences on detoxification and international cooperation, which means more foreign trips. Meanwhile, India's drug producers and consumers are on an all-time high.

Shifting Loyalty

● If proof was needed of the fickleness of political loyalty, it came when Sonia Gandhi decided against contesting her late husband's seat. Congress(I) Rajya Sabha MPs Ratnakar Pandey and S.S. Ahluwalia's claim to fame was servility to the Gandhi family. In fact, they were in the vanguard of the 'draft Sonia and knock Narasimha Rao campaign'.

But now in a remarkable volte face, Ahluwalia and Pandey have been frequenting Narasimha Rao's residence and office. Ahluwalia was sent as the Congress(I) observer to Meghalaya. Then along with Satish Sharma, he even accompanied the prime minister to Sriperumbudur.



The two MPs now view the prime minister as a great leader. Gushed Pandey recently: "Raoji is the only man after Rajivji who can run this country. We all support him for the bold initiatives he has taken on the economic and political fronts." Obviously, it is 'Raoji' who will decide the renomination for their soon-to-end Rajya Sabha term.

TAIL PIECE

Former deputy prime minister Devi Lal on why he thinks the Bharatiya Janata Party is an organisation of traders *(vyaparis)*:

First they adulterate, then take the weight, set a rate and finally calculate.

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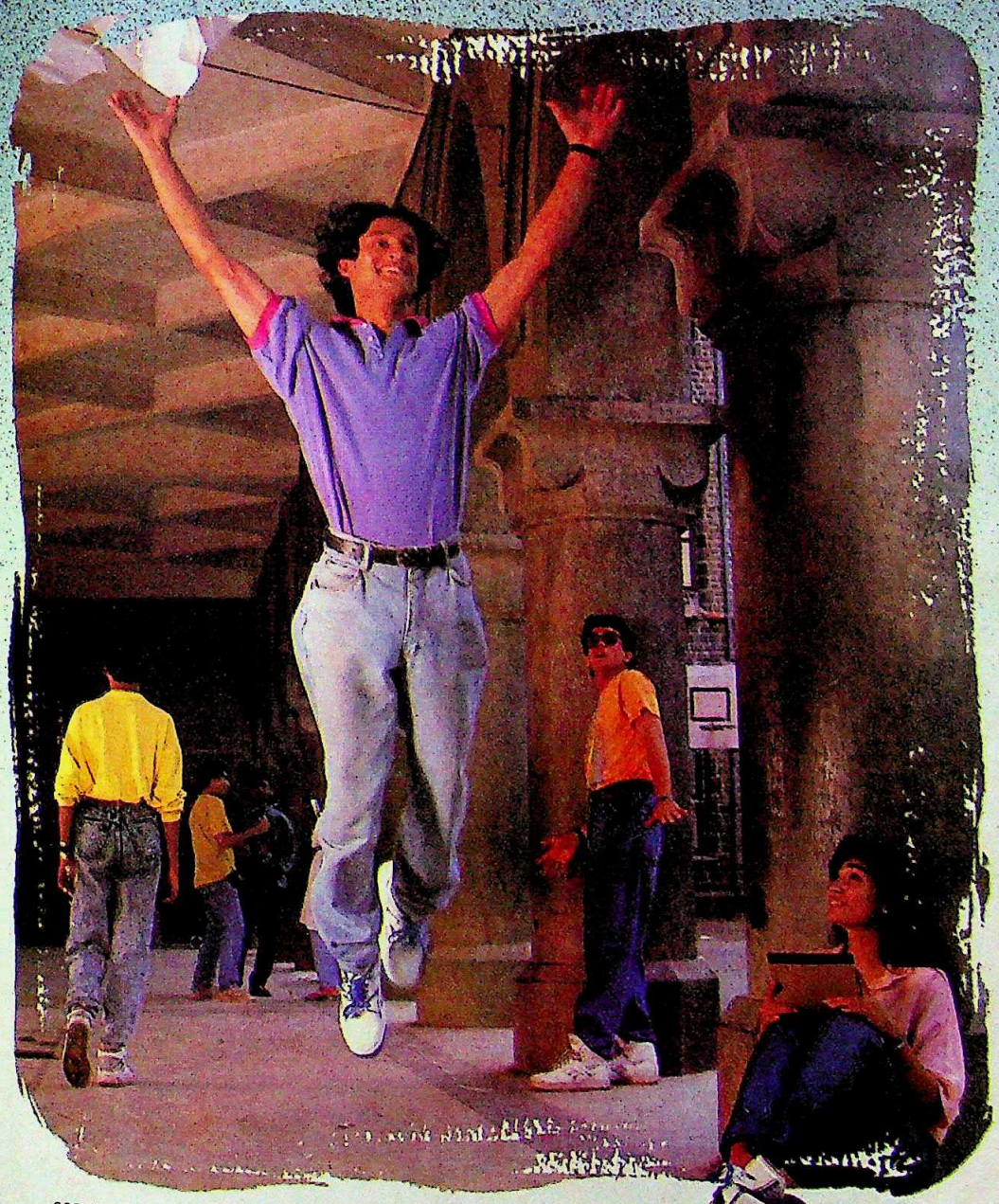

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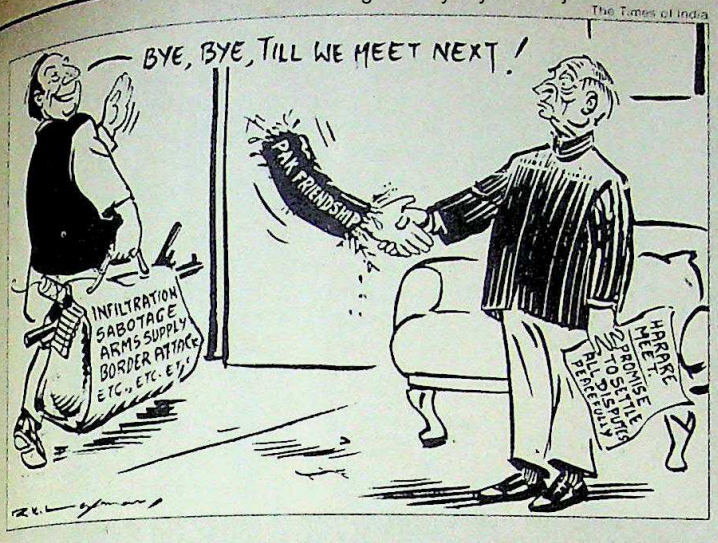


• *There is no need to review the Tehri project, it is safe.*
■ Minister of State for Power KALPNATH RAI

• *It is time to fight the merchants of religion who sold and purchased shrines.* ■ V.P. SINGH in *The Statesman*

• *In Ayodhya, temples are the only attraction for tourists.*
■ KALYAN SINGH in *The Pioneer*

• *The biggest noose around the* BJP*'s neck is the Uttar Pradesh Government.* ■ K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN in *Probe India*

• *I'm amazed that a person like V.P. Singh should talk about contempt of court.* ■ L.K. ADVANI in *Frontline*

• *To be afraid of* IMF *conditionalities is to be afraid of ourselves.*
■ I.G. PATEL, former RBI governor, in *Deccan Herald*

• *Any self-respecting man would do what I did.*
■ GEORGE FERNANDES, on his resignation from the Janata Dal posts, in *Sunday*

• *Anyone who has Rs 4,000 crore may take over* ITC.
■ J.N. SAPRU, outgoing chairman of the company, in *The Independent*

• *This is a slap on the face of those who attempted to separate sports from the country's interest.* ■ BAL THACKERAY, on the cancellation of the one-day cricket match with Pakistan in Bombay, in *The Telegraph*

• *And here is a man, Sitaram Kesari, who was picked up straight from the gutter by the Congress(I).* ■ K.K. TEWARY in *The Statesman*

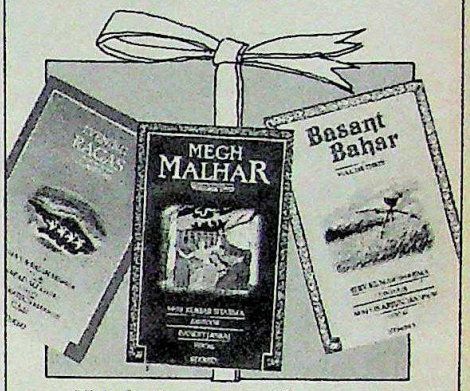
• *Biju deserved to be slapped.* ■ CHANDRAMANI SAHU, who slapped the Orissa chief minister, in *The Times of India*

• *Azharuddin's calculations misfired.*
■ IMRAN KHAN in *Indian Express*

• *It is the creative greed which keeps me going.*
■ GULZAR in *The Independent*

• *It would be difficult to find a man who can cope with all of me.*
■ TEHMINA DURRANI, Pakistani author of the best-seller *My Feudal Lord*, in *Savvy*

The Perfect Gift.



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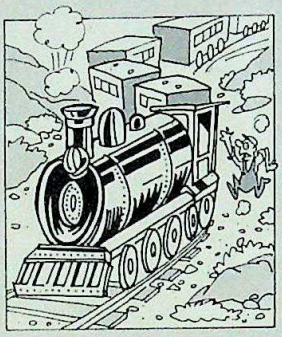
GOLDEN YEARS

■ The years between 45 and 60 are the ones that people never want to end. But in Haryana, there is a whole new generation that can't wait to turn 60. Having decided to hand out old age pensions, this is what the Haryana Government discovered to its own surprise. Deluged by applications from those claiming to be superannuated, the authorities are at sea trying to establish their actual age. Prodding claimants' teeth and counting the furrows on their brow are some methods. But they're not entirely foolproof. Many women, in fact, do not look a day over 45. One official in Sahanpur village added some silver streaks to his own hair when he tried to inspect the face of a veiled woman. He touched an exposed nerve. The *Tai* abused him angrily and refused to unveil her age. For her pains, her petition was rejected. The problem is that people have forgotten how to age gracefully.

GHOST DRIVER

■ A storm was really brewing in this teacup. Only nobody seemed aware of it. When the driver of a goods train travelling from Rekhni to Peddampet in Andhra Pradesh stopped at Rekhni station for a cup of tea, he hadn't reckoned for any trouble. But as he sat quietly sipping his elixir, he did a double-take. One of the trains pulling out of the station happened to be the one he was meant to be driving. Worse, the driver's seat was empty. The panic button was pressed immediately. All trains in that section were stopped in their tracks, level crossings were dropped and the line cleared



for the driverless train.

But then the train ran out of steam, coming to stop at Peddampet station, having run right on track over a distance of 150 km at a speed of 70 km an hour. Authorities still haven't been able to trace the invisible man behind the engine. And the gremlins who put a spoke in its wheels.

WRISTS RAPPED

■ We had thought this was the age of gender-benders. But the women of Sindri, a small coal town in Bihar, think otherwise. Recently, a delegation of 200-odd women marched to the local police station and stormed it in style. But it was an invasion with a difference: the women were armed with nothing but their courage and a bunch of bangles. They were meant to make a statement, and they did so with a resounding jangle.

Residents of Sindri were tired of craning their necks to keep track of the rising crime graph of the town. So, the women chose to disprove their own favoured sexual stereotype by wielding the battleaxe. If the policemen couldn't deal with the increasing criminality of the town, then they should limit themselves to wearing bangles, they said. And having done their bit to solve the problems of the world, they stomped off to do their housework.

BOOK BLUES

■ The books that shook the world almost found their way to the trash can recently. Even in Kerala, one of the last outposts of orthodoxy, the Marxist mantra has failed to cast a spell. When the House of Soviet Culture in Trivandrum decided to shed its stodgy image, the first casualty was its literature. It was decided to do away with all tomes authored by Marx and comrades. The city's leading waste-paper dealer came up with a bargain. But Marxist die-hards got in touch with the CPI(M) headquarters and asked them to

prevent the books from following the heretical law of the free market. The party top brass advocated individual initiative: the never-changers could buy the books from the dealer. They did, paying extra money for it. Anything to prevent all those weighty words from going to waste.

NO SEX PLEASE...

■ Who says our ministers' foreign tours are a waste of valuable foreign exchange? A Rajasthan minister recently came back from a tour of the far-out Far East much the wiser for the jaunt. If his bright idea is implemented, then his state too might have a zero population growth. All newlyweds will be presented with a sex education book called *Pehla Kadam* and a packet of condoms, to propagate the message of circumspect sex. The climax of the generous gift package is a coupon for couples who want to know more about the birds and the bees but are too shy to ask. Apparently if they send the coupon to the right address, they will receive a more advanced discourse on the perils of unbridled passion. But considering that most of the rural population is illiterate, it might be a case of putting the tonga before the horse.

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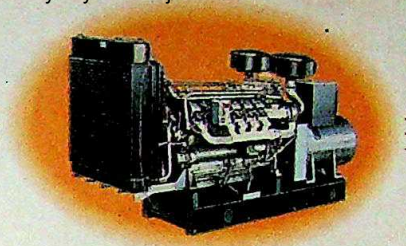

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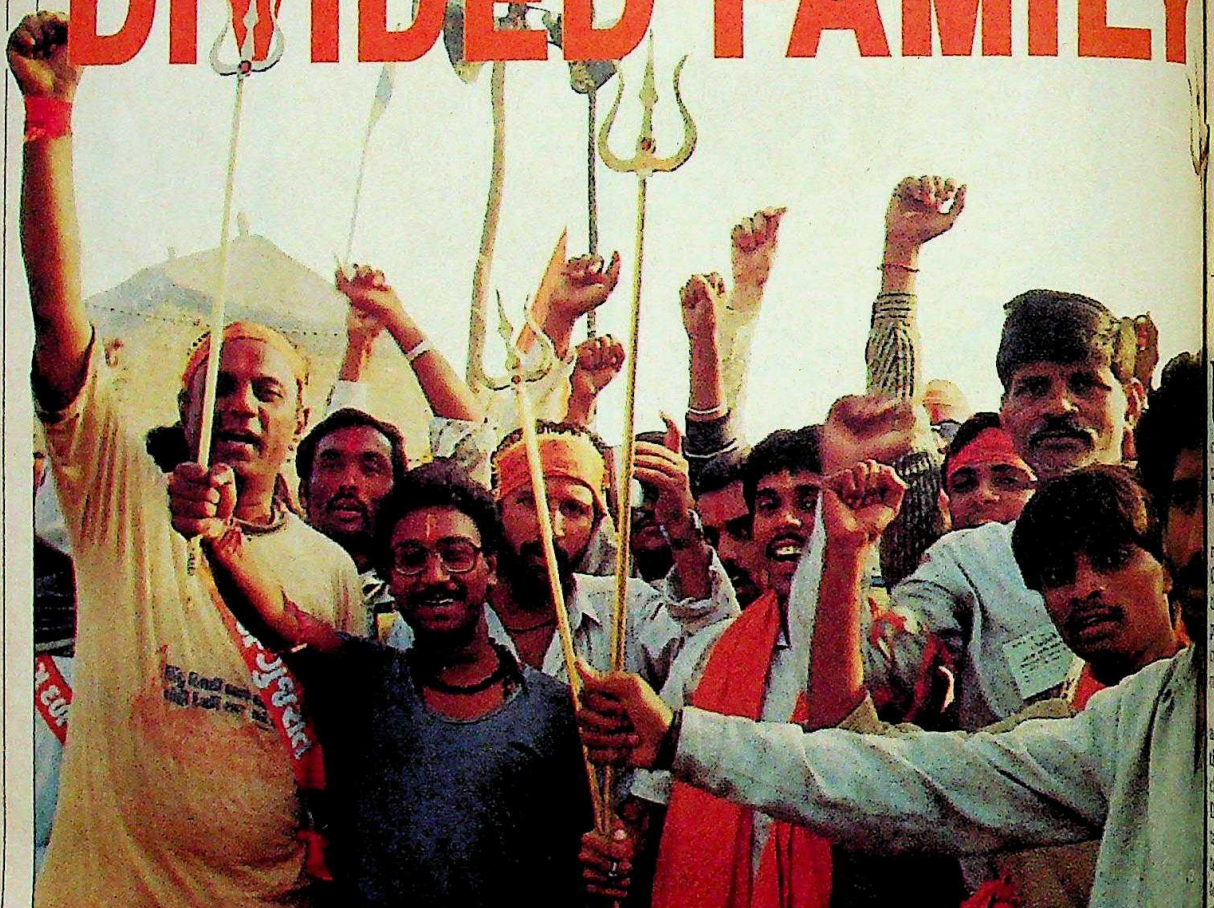

By DILIP AWASTHI and SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

THE most common question now being asked in political circles across the country is: what does the BJP want? Demolition of the Babri Masjid? A responsible centrist image? Identification with the Hindutva streetfighter? National opposition status? The lotus of moderation? Or the trishul of aggression? The oppressive secrecy within the entire Sangh *parivar*—the RSS and its satellites that include the BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal—frustrates even the most intelligent of guessing games. The only thing clear is what it doesn't want—public perception of chinks developing in a brotherhood that revels in the mystique of being the most cohesive and disciplined cadre-based organisation in the country.

And yet, as the recent storming of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by Bajrang Dal activists showed, it was this very image that was threatened. When breakaway groups disregarded the admonitions of senior partymen and organisers, they seemed to make a mockery of what was supposed to be a well-oiled movement. In November 1989, the Ayodhya issue

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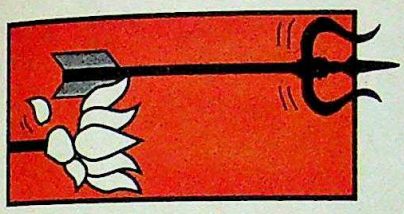
as symbolised by the shilanyas, reaped a rich harvest for the party, taking its strength in the Lok Sabha from two to 86. The sanguinary kar seva preceding the last mid-term elections worked even more electoral wonders, taking the BJP strength in the Lok Sabha to 119 and giving it a governing majority in Uttar Pradesh. But the latest fracas in Ayodhya has caused some introspection about strategy and direction. The old magic cannot be taken for granted any more. The BJP is no longer a party openly scoffing at the law and turning up its nose at the rule of law, but very much an establishment entity, publicly committed to behaving responsibly at the Centre and sworn to uphold the law as well as the Constitution in the four states it governs. And these new concerns were bound to come into conflict with those very cadres that the party had strengthened in the cause of the Ram temple.



THE CRISIS

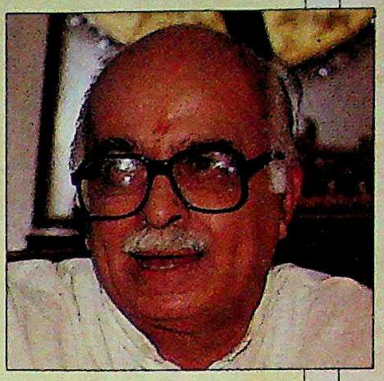
VHP Hotheads Jump the Gun

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh would like to forget as a bad dream the latest assault on Ayodhya. The kar sevaks' action not only severely strained the credibility of his own fledgling government but also left some ugly scars on the made-for-each-other relationship of the RSS-VHP-BJP combine.

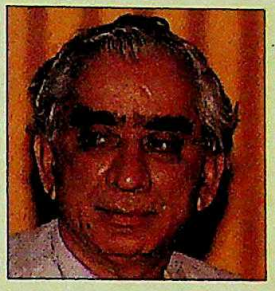
Kalyan Singh found himself caught between the roughest rock and the toughest hard place between October 18 and October 31. For, it was on him, more than anybody else, that the burden of the balancing act fell: of trying to uphold his public promise to protect the mosque while still maintaining control over—and also appeasing—the impatient foot-soldiers of the VHP and Bajrang Dal.

When he sprang the surprise notification to acquire 2.77 acres of land at the Babri Masjid complex, Kalyan Singh thought he was being politically astute. His intention was clearly to quell the growing criticism from VHP and Bajrang Dal activists that the BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh had taken no steps to start construction of the temple. This temporarily blunted the cutting edge of the VHP's criticism and took away some of the mileage that the hotheads had gained in the internecine competition within the *parivar* for leadership of the temple movement. The increasing clout of the VHP on the national stage has been in direct proportion to the heat it has been able to generate in its uni-dimensional temple campaign. And, therefore, it cannot afford to be finessed on this issue even by a fraternal group like the BJP.

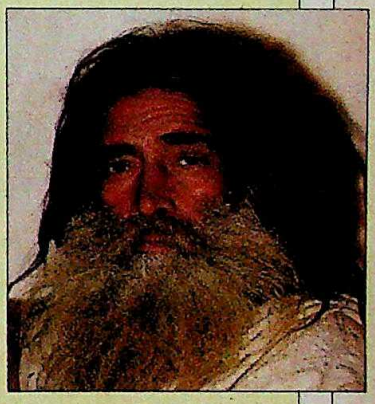
In order to take the lead again, the VHP hotheads struck back. Quickly abandoning its originally planned 40-day Bajrang Mahayagya, the VHP, under the leadership of Vinay Katiyar, the state Bajrang Dal president and BJP's Faizabad MP, stole Kalyan Singh's show by moving into the disputed complex and demolishing five small rooms housing some old temples. They spread the word that the land was acquired by the Government in order to remove all hurdles in the way of



"Even the minor aberration in Ayodhya distresses us. Those who stepped out of line were inspired by quarters outside."
L.K. ADVANI, *BJP*



"You cannot make the political souffle rise twice from the same recipe."
JASWANT SINGH, *BJP*



"Our patience is wearing thin. How could a sympathetic government order arrest of those who hoisted a flag at Ayodhya?"
MAHANT PARAMHANS, *VHP*

"The flag hoisting was an accident. In such a big movement, errors can occur."
S.S. BHANDARI, *BJP*

"There is no going back for the BJP now. We won't compromise on the temple to save the Government."
ACHARYA DHARMENDRA, *Bajrang Dal*

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the construction of the temple. As Mahesh Narain Singh, secretary of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Samiti, put it: "We expect the land to be handed over to us after acquisition by the Government for building the new temple."

FRATRICIDAL FISSURES

Hawks, Moderates Cross Swords

BUT the moves backfired. Kalyan Singh's acquisition of the land was a palliative act of procrastination and not intended as a giveaway to the VHP. The consequent demolition of the temples led not only to fratricidal quarrels within the VHP but also gave political mileage to opponents of the BJP—for instance, V.P. Singh—who used the demolitions as further proof of the high-handedness of the Hindutva movement.

There was more to follow. The acquisition notification was immediately challenged by the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) in the high court, which issued an interim order prohibiting the transfer of the acquired land to any group by the state Government. It also forbade any new permanent construction on it. This jolted the BJP and VHP leaders. And they backtracked. Their new line sounded less militant than before: the temple would be constructed, yes, but right now the immediate goal was to remove all hurdles in the path of this ultimate end. Leaders like VHP Vice-President Acharya Giriraj Kishore, Vinay Katiyar, and Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Samiti President Mahant Avaidyanath, appealled to the kar sevaks to observe restraint in the 'Shaurya Divas' programme on October 30. This only added salt to the kar sevaks' wounds.

The protests arose in earnest from the kar sevaks who were, in the fashion of young terrorists in Punjab, being referred to as "the boys". A delegation of more than 500 kar sevaks from Banda refused to go back to their barracks from the disputed site. Santosh Tiwari, 32, a kar sevak, summed up the resentment: "When there was a hostile government, they asked us to raid the Babri Masjid. Now when we have a government which came into existence because of us, they ask us to keep away."

The leadership lost its slippery hold the next day when kar sevaks hoisted a small saffron flag on one of the domes, while damaging portions of the outer wall. Finally, some 300 kar sevaks were arrested. A melee of protests ensued after some VHP leaders shepherded over 500 of their own men into buses to shunt them out of Ayodhya. All the while the "boys" shouted slogans against Kalyan Singh and Katiyar. On November 2, the religious heads, including Vice-President of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Samiti, Mahant Nrit Gopal Das; President of the Janmabhoomi Nyas, Mahant Ram Chandra Paramhans, and Mahant Avaidyanath, held a separate meeting to decide their course of action.

Significantly, none of the VHP's RSS leadership—VHP Secretary-General Ashok Singhal, Giriraj Kishore and Katiyar—were present at this meeting. Said Mahant Paramhans: "Look, we all are saints and do not know the intricacies of politics. We are ready to wait for two months for the so-called removal of hurdles. Then we, along with the Ram

LEGAL STATUS

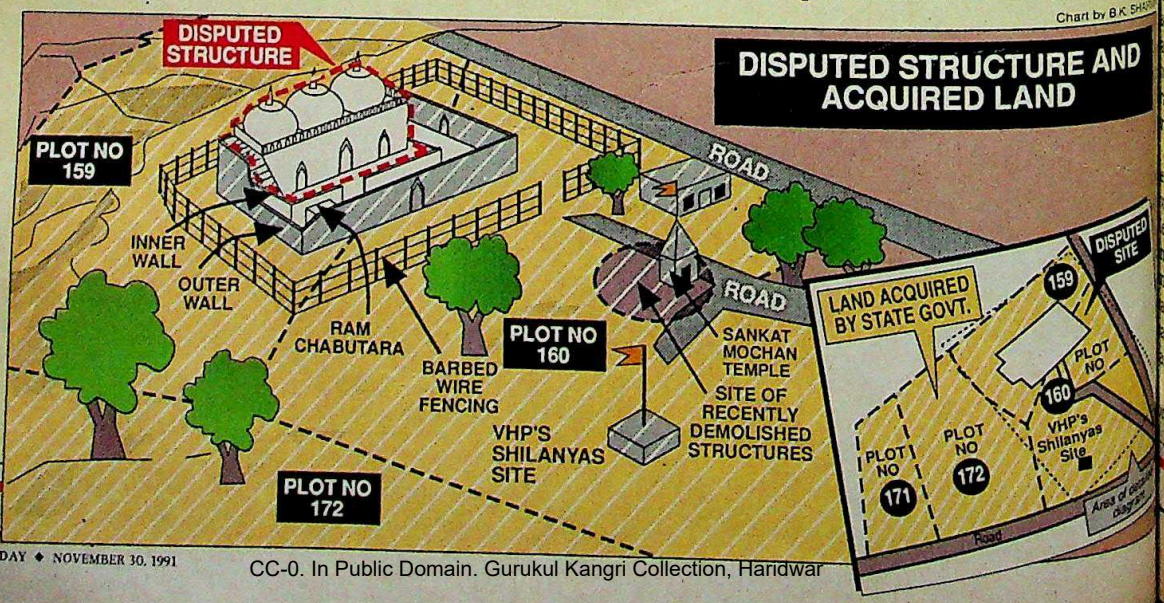
Courting Confusion

AT best it can be called a pyrrhic victory for the BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh. The high court has allowed the acquisition of land around the disputed shrine in Ayodhya but prohibited any permanent construction to come up on it.

The court's interim order of October 25 on three writ petitions filed by Mohammed Hashim and others has, however, dramatically changed the situation in one respect. With the Government's acquisition of four plots—numbers 159, 160, 171, 172—in place, the disputed area has now shrunk to 0.73 acre inside the outer wall of the shrine. It was 3.5 acres before, following the August 1989 order of a special high court bench in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case to maintain status quo. The area encompassed 23 revenue plots as well as the VHP's shilanyas site.

The new order came after a week-long legal battle between the state's Advocate-General, Virendra Kumar Chowdhry, and Sunni Waqf Board's lawyers, Abdul Mannan and Zafaryab Jilani, both Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) activists. The Government in its rejoinder said that the land was urgently required for developing facilities for tourists and pilgrims who visit Ayodhya for the six-week Kartik Mela starting on November 18. But the Waqf Board

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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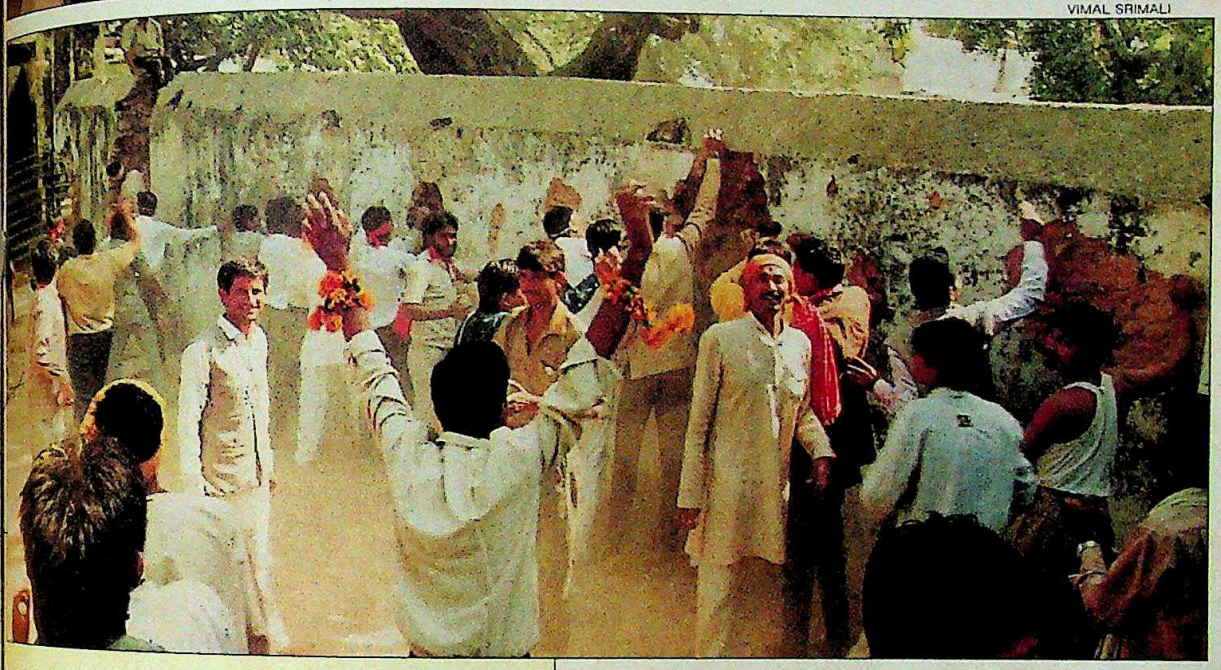
the VHP's clout on the national stage has been in direct proportion to its gains on Ayodhya. So, it can't afford to be finessed on this issue, even by the BJP.

(Clockwise from left) Singhal; Katiyar; and kar sevaks in Ayodhya: militant muscle-flexing

VIMAL SRIMALI



ontested it. Its lawyers argued that the Government has used the 'pretext' of tourism to acquire 2.77 acres of the disputed land around the mosque to transfer it to the VHP for the construction of a Ram temple. They also questioned the validity of the Government's October 11 notification which was issued when the main case was still pending with the special court.

After hearing the arguments, Justice Satish Chandra Mathur, Justice Brijesh Kumar and Justice Syed Haider Abbas held that the Government was authorised to acquire land for the purpose stated—development of tourism and facilities for pilgrims. However, in the light of the objections raised by the Waqf Board lawyers, the judges passed the interim order, pending final judgement, prohibiting the transfer of the acquired land to any person or organisation, or its use for any permanent construction.

The BJP Government is examining the interim order to get it reviewed later. It also intends to seek clarification from the court on the permanent construction bar. Argues Revenue Minister Brahm Datt Dwivedi: "Any building has an average life span of 50 years. So how can you call anything a permanent structure?" The BMAC, meanwhile, has filed a writ in the Supreme Court. And the apex court has sent a notice to the state Government and listed the case for hearing later this month.

So, till the highest court gives its final verdict, the legal confusion will continue.

—DILIP AWASTHI

devotees, will demolish the building. If this Government wants, it can act as Mulayam Singh did last year."

THE kar sevaks' action left the moderates in the BJP and VHP groping in the dark. Leaders tried to deny that the incidents had occurred. In fact, some of them even went to the extent of committing what the Hindutva movement would consider blasphemy—disowning the kar sevaks. Others, like Uttar Pradesh Revenue Minister Brahm Datt Dwivedi said those who damaged the mosque were V.P. Singh's plants. Embarrassment followed embarrassment when in the midst of all this the Home Department in Lucknow released a press statement: the thrust of it was that the persons arrested for the incident on October 31 were indeed kar sevaks. More fissures were evident when, on November 2, Katiyar and the BJP's Khajuraho MP Uma Bharti not only owned up to the doings of the kar sevaks but also praised their action.

It was the turn of the Uttar Pradesh Government to face the fire. The mahants excoriated it for the arrests. Said Mahant Paramhans at the November 2 meeting: "Our patience is now wearing thin. How could a sympathetic government order the arrest of kar sevaks who had just hoisted a flag on the Janmabhoomi?" Mahant Vasudevacharya sounded even more aggressive: "The Government has taken off the flag hoisted by the kar sevaks. I just want to tell them that we will hoist it again shortly."

All this did little to assuage the damage to the mandir movement in which the Kalyan Singh Government, VHP leaders, the mahants and Bajrang Dal activists seemed to be at

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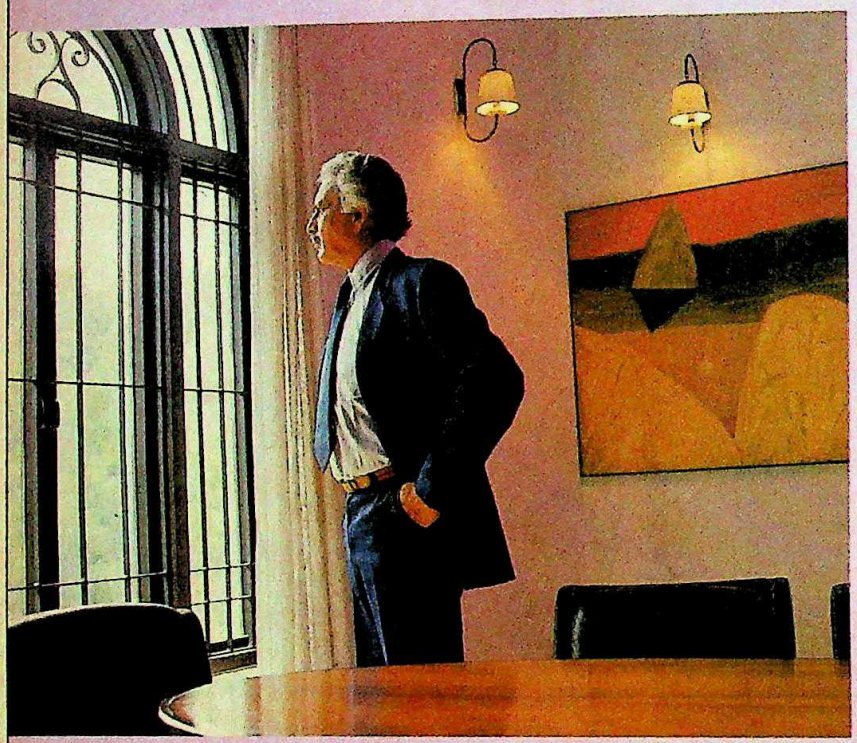

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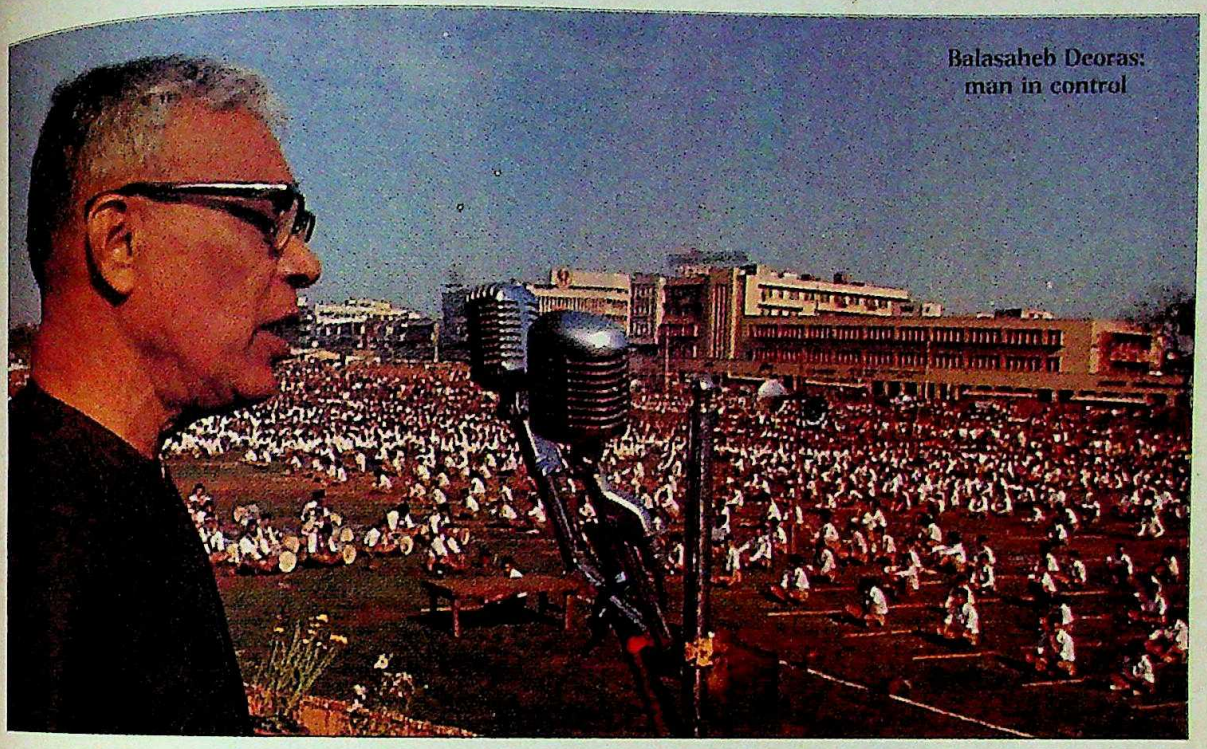
hasten the temple construction, but ease the pressure tactics on the Kalyan Singh Government: this was the strategy thrashed out by the RSS and agreed upon by the BJP and VHP.



Balasaheb Deoras: man in control

cross-purposes. The BJP Government and its VHP sympathisers—mainly the RSS lobby—looked like a helpless unorganised lot. For the first time.

THE STITCH

Big Brother Attempts the Patch-Up

PREDICTABLY, with the offspring feuding among themselves, the RSS got into the act. At its national executive meeting in Calcutta last fortnight, it summoned senior leaders from the BJP and the VHP. The main item on the peace-making agenda: Ayodhya and the fracas surrounding it.

Attended by 91 senior RSS members, including Sangh supremo Balasaheb Deoras—who travelled out of Nagpur after a long illness—and its General Secretary H.V. Sheshadri, the meeting was crucial. This was evident from the fact that BJP President Murli Manohar Joshi also arrived in the city on November 3 to attend two sessions of meetings with RSS and VHP leaders—running into eight hours over two days. Also attending the four-day meeting were BJP Vice-President Sundar Singh Bhandari and Ashok Singhal, who thundered that "the faith of the people cannot be changed or decided upon by the courts". He later told INDIA TODAY: "Since the RSS is a part of our family, we gave a report on Ayodhya to Deoras. Usually we take no help from the RSS, unless we have a massive programme like kar seva or shila pujan. The next time we need their cooperation will be during the construction of the temple."

Though Singhal bravely declared that "ours (BJP-VHP-RSS) is a fort of unity which cannot be broken", cracks were evident. There were, especially, differences over the behaviour of the kar sevaks. Singhal insisted there were no excesses in Ayodhya. Said he: "Hoisting flags on a temple top is of little importance." But Bhandari disagreed: "That was an accident. In such a big movement, there is always a possibility of human error. But this was never intended to be a part of our plans. We're taking precautions."

At the meeting, the VHP agreed that "things had started rolling with the acquisition of the land", but asserted there was no need for the Uttar Pradesh Government to soft-pedal the issue fearing an adverse reaction from the Centre. Singhal declared: "I am sure the Uttar Pradesh Government will not be dismissed. We are willing to give all the parties concerned on Ayodhya the longest rope. If they don't accept the realities, we will have to go ahead with legislation."

Joshi's argument, enunciating the problems plaguing the Uttar Pradesh Government, apparently convinced Deoras and other RSS leaders. So that, finally, the strategy evolved by the RSS and agreed upon by the BJP and VHP was: speed up the "way to the temple" at Ayodhya but do not queer the pitch of the Kalyan Singh Government by applying excessive pressure. In effect, the VHP's pressure tactics are expected to become subtler.

The RSS-VHP-BJP also decided that construction work on the undisputed territory should continue. Also, sources say, it was agreed to make public details of the VHP's case that a temple was destroyed and a mosque constructed at the site.

By the time Deoras and the RSS hierarchy departed, it

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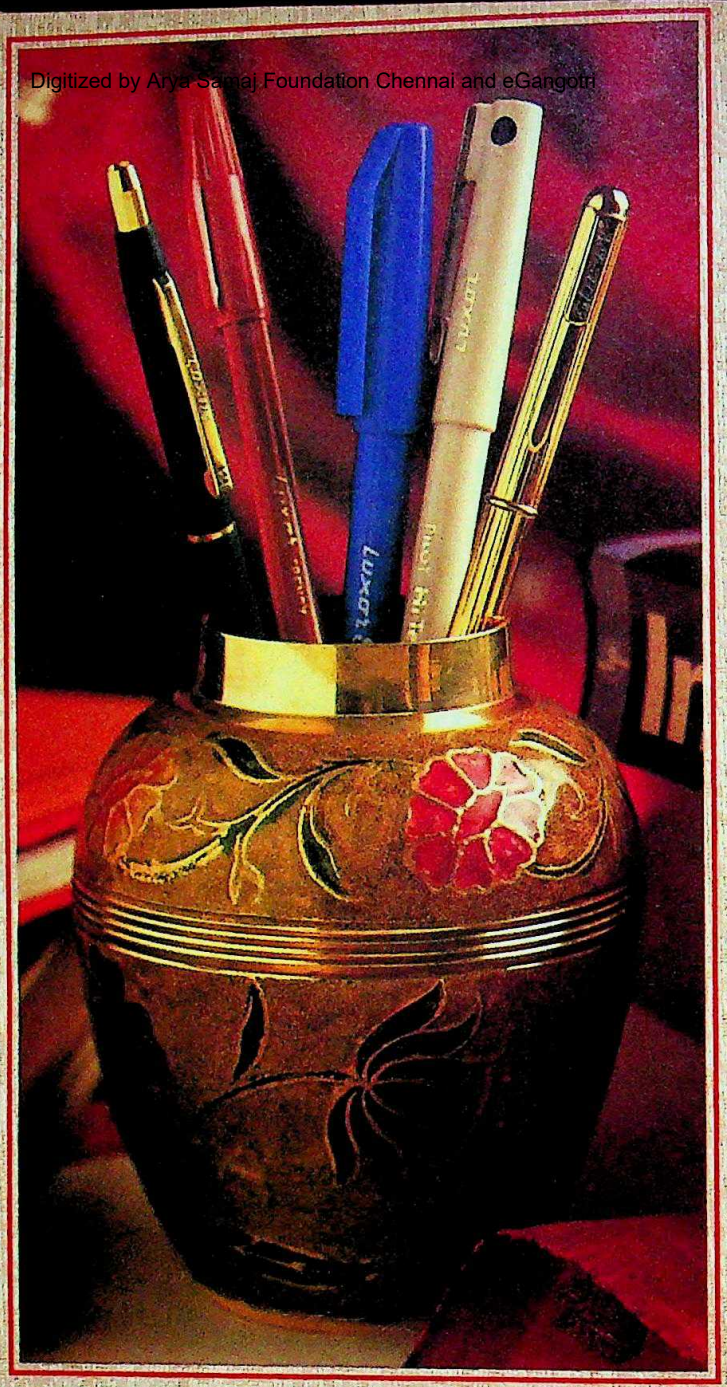

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seemed a potentially growing rift between the BJP and VHP had been stemmed. But clearly the stitch effected by big brother RSS was a tentative one: no grand, clear-cut line of action had been proclaimed; the strategy agreed upon had the look of a knee-jerk reaction, a mere holding manoeuvre.

NEW GAMEPLAN

Underplay Rifts, Broaden Base

IN the absence of a unanimous, authoritative course of action, the ploy is to play it cool for the moment. The BJP moderates—with the backing of the RSS—have been working at convincing their committed cadres that while the trishul is a handy weapon, may be they don't need to wield it immediately. For several reasons.

With a government in power in the state and no tangible return in sight, they don't want to repeat the recent trouble in Ayodhya. A re-enactment of the scene could prove politically devastating for the BJP which would be branded as a party unable to control its cadres. With a national consensus having emerged against the Hindutva card, the BJP feels it must continue to broaden its base.

There are other reasons why the party believes that it can stall action on building the temple. There is the pervasive dislike for precipitating early elections—inevitable in Uttar Pradesh if the Government begins to demolish the masjid and invites its own dismissal. The party is also aware of a larger compulsion: the apparently growing feeling within the country that a period of political calm is necessary if the Indian economy is to be pulled out of the red. Whatever gagging noises the BJP may make in public over rising prices, it is clear that its leadership—especially its economic think-tank—is committed to liberalisation.

Nor is the party's central leadership averse to continuing its wary attitude of cooperation with the Congress(I), largely because of the ruling party's ambiguous stand on Ayodhya. With Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's non-confrontationist attitude earning recognition even from L.K. Advani, any escape routes that he may offer to the BJP leader will at least be considered.

Whatever efforts the Uttar Pradesh Government may make in acquiring land around the mosque, it knows that final success will come only after the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram temple is built over the Babri Masjid. This will mean its demolition, or as the party prefers to put it, its relocation.

In private, senior party members say that they are prepared to take the mosque by force. If nothing else works, the Uttar Pradesh Government will acquire the land over which the mosque stands by using the Land Acquisition Act,

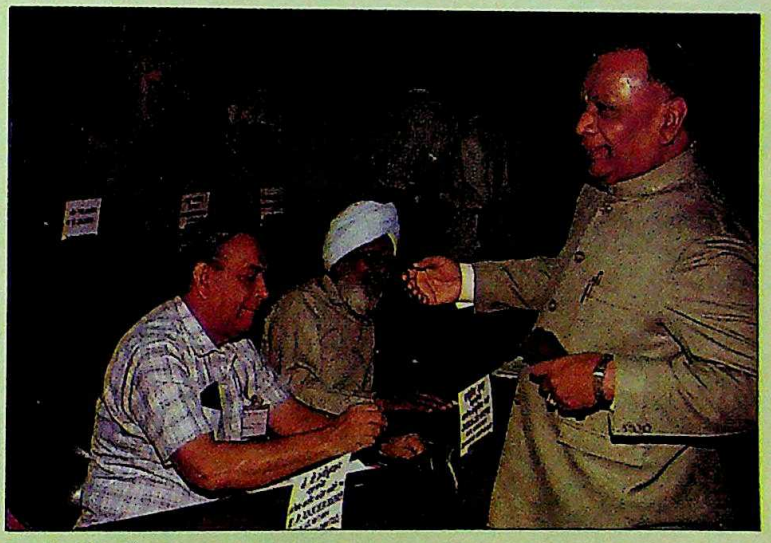
NATIONAL PARTIES

Tables Turn

WHATEVER the BJP leadership may now say about the National Integration Council (NIC) resolution, its political rivals will certainly take advantage of the commitment it made on not violating the high court judgements in the Ayodhya case. Says CPI(M) leader H.S. Surjeet: "If they go against the court now, they will lose credibility."

A campaign of sorts has already begun against the BJP. What happened recently in Ayodhya is being interpreted as the BJP's loss of control over its 'Bajrang Dal boys'. Veteran socialist Madhu Limaye voices the concern: "Emotional movements like Ayodhya throw up extremists who can replace moderates, as happened with the Akalis in the '80s." There is already talk of a secularists' combine taking on the BJP as was suggested by the recently-formed group of eight, which included M.J. Akbar and Subodh Kant Sahay.

But there are problems in an anti-BJP front. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao is in no mood to bend from his consensus approach. Says a senior Union minister: "We are aware of the public mood which is against any confrontation." The prime minister seems to have prevailed over his Cabinet colleague, Arjun Singh, to cancel his trip to Ayodhya. Says Congress(I) spokesman C.P. Thakur: "Congressmen do have different perceptions on Ayodhya but we are conscious of the parliamentary strengths." If the Congress(I) refuses to join an anti-BJP front, the move is unlikely to succeed.



Leaders at NIC meeting: wresting the initiative

However, the National Front-Left combine would like to pin the BJP to the wall. In fact, the combine even perceived its own pressure tactics to be behind the BJP's apparent surrender. As Janata Dal leader V.P. Singh put it: "Our pressure forced the BJP to abide by the court verdict."

The onslaught is having some effect, with even L.K. Advani being forced to apologise for the Bajrang Dal's over-enthusiasm. V.P. Singh says the people have begun to see through the BJP's 'game'. That is debatable, but clearly, another mistake like October 31 could well upset the BJP gameplan.

—ZAFAR AGHA

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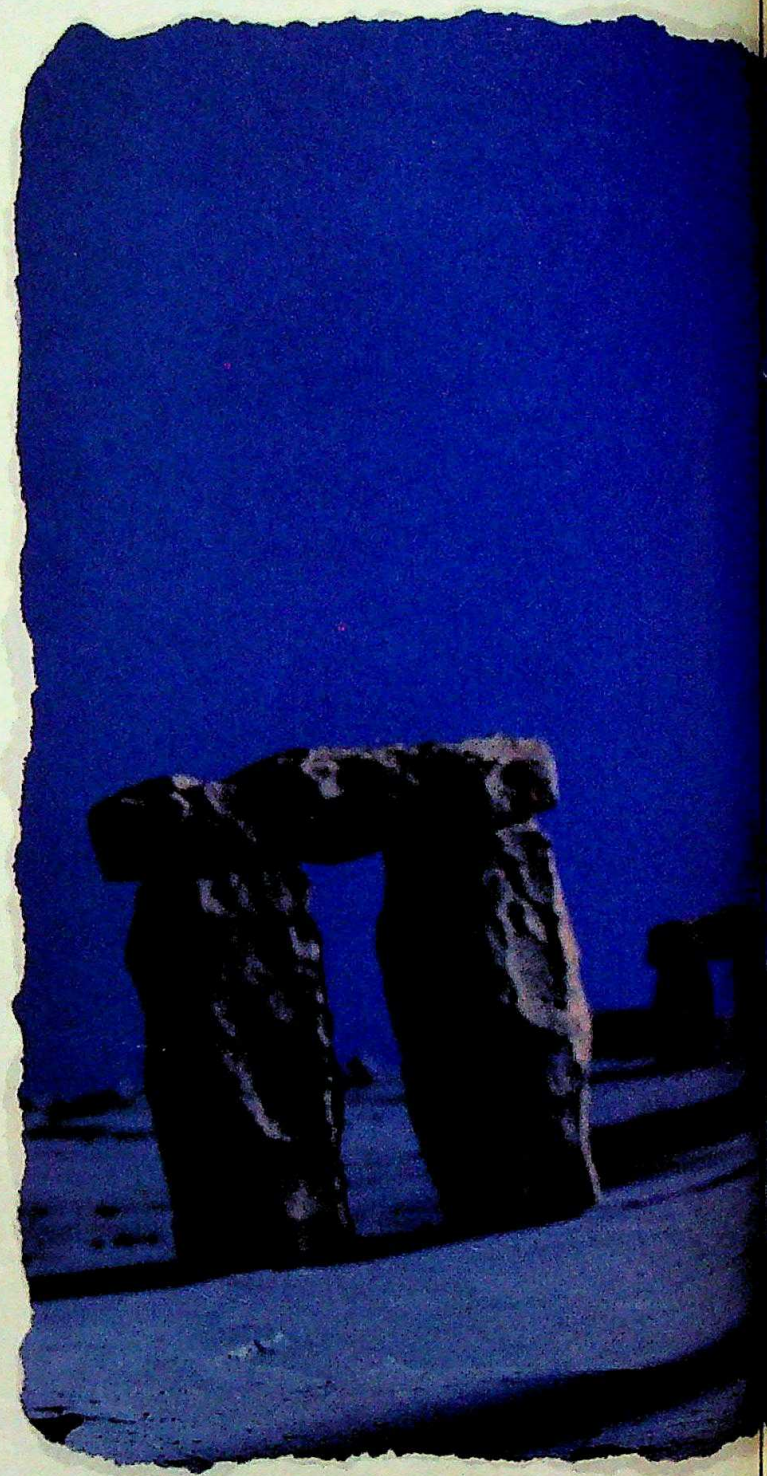

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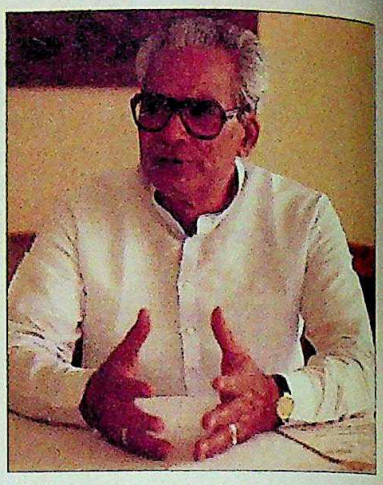
its highly-touted 'try us' promise has completely boomeranged on the BJP: inefficiency, bungling and even corruption mark its governments in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh.



Patwa, Kalyan Singh and Shekhawat: hopes belied

1894, and face the possibility of the President or the Supreme Court ordering a stay. Then, as a senior party ideologue puts it: "The matter will be decided on the streets."

But, say party leaders, if the VHP and Bajrang Dal resort to force, there will not be much bloodshed in Ayodhya. The reasoning is that the Muslims will not leave their houses knowing the BJP Government is in control of both the police and the civil administration.

BANKING ON DELAY

Play it Legal, Hope For the Best

BUT even if the BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh remains untouched, there will be repercussions in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh, not to mention the damage to its national image. All those liberals within the senior leadership of the party, who in 1990 strove to prevent the BJP from becoming a single-plank party of Ram bhakts, are uncertain of their response to such street-fighting. Already, they have started saying that a national political party which is ruling in four states cannot be allowed to "abandon the rule of law". As a senior member of the party says: "There can be no question of the BJP violating the law of the highest court of the land in letter or in spirit. If it comes to choosing between obeying the court or the will of the VHP, then the BJP will have to part company with the VHP."

And if the BJP hopes to consolidate its northern gains elsewhere, it knows that it will not achieve it through its cry of mosque-demolition. While it may be confident of winning an election in Uttar Pradesh, despite possible Central interference, the BJP is aware that this will neither enhance the party's national image nor win it elections in other states. The great imponderable in this equation is the Hindu voter. How committed is he to building the temple over the mosque? How strong is his stomach for violence—of the kind that will be unleashed if the mosque is dismantled? Is the Indian experiment of co-existence a strong enough desire to counter such deliberate divisiveness?

Already the party is at pains to distance itself from what Advani calls the 'unfortunate' incident in Ayodhya. Said he: "Even a minor aberration distresses us. Those who stepped out of line were inspired by quarters outside." He has repeatedly stated that as soon as he heard of the incident, he tried to get in touch with Katiyar—"our man in Ayodhya". Katiyar, he says, assured him and Kalyan Singh, that he was doing all he could to maintain calm. Other BJP leaders allege infiltration by 'hotheaded Shiv Sena elements'.

In a way the BJP is now banking on the legal system with its chronic delays to bail it out. Says a senior party leader: "Nothing can be resolved for two years, even five. So where is the crisis?" As for the VHP, in public it claims it is not hampered by legal niceties. Its leaders have left it to the BJP to work out the legalities—build the temple they will. Non-RSS members of the VHP, particularly Vice-President Vishnu Hari Dalmia, have often said that building the temple is their final goal.

But in private, the RSS members of the VHP admit to having been pushed into a tight corner. Given the RSS' disdain for lumpens, the kind of violence with which the Bajrang Dal is now synonymous is galling. While the RSS leaders in the VHP realise that they desperately need these storm-troopers to maintain the tempo of the movement, they are also fully aware of the damage such enthusiasm can cause. So far, the RSS has kept all divergent opinions among its three affiliates on a tight leash. Yet, for the first time in years, both the RSS and VHP find that their credibility among zealots has dipped. On the one hand, both have expressed their commitment to the temple and have inched towards their goal. On the other, having striven so hard to bring the BJP to its present position, both are wary of damaging the prospects of that party—in Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere.

The cooling off after blowing hot in Uttar Pradesh is in ample evidence in states like Rajasthan. When one calls the state party office in Jaipur, no longer is one greeted with *Jai Siya Ram*. In Madhya Pradesh, Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa forgot to send the Ram card this Diwali. He has also stopped shouting *Jai Shree Ram* at public speeches. In fact, while Patwa praises the Uttar Pradesh Government "for

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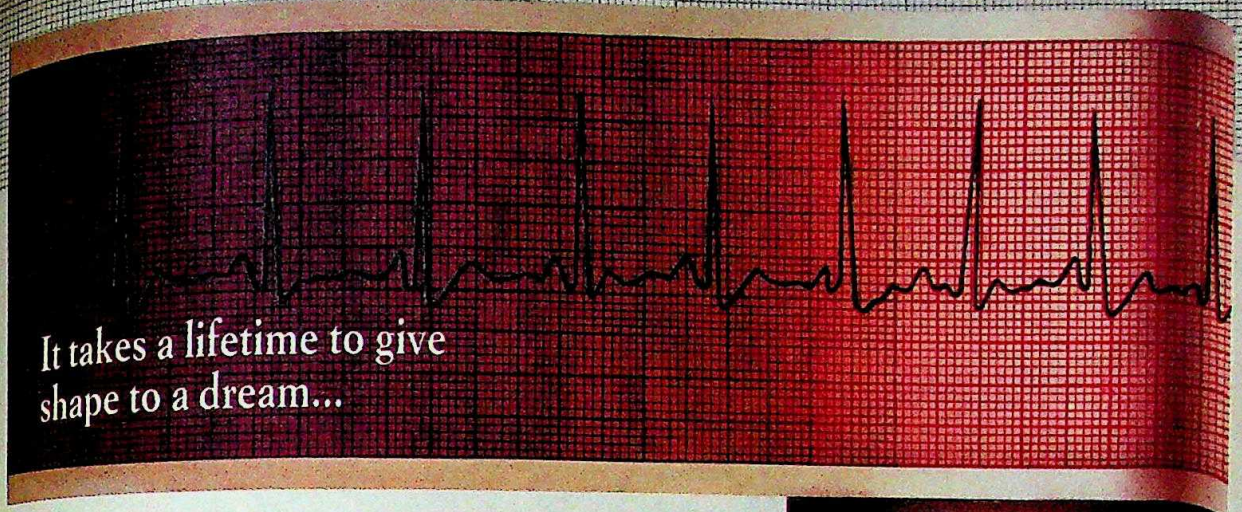

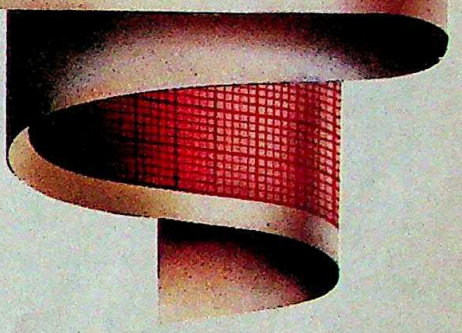

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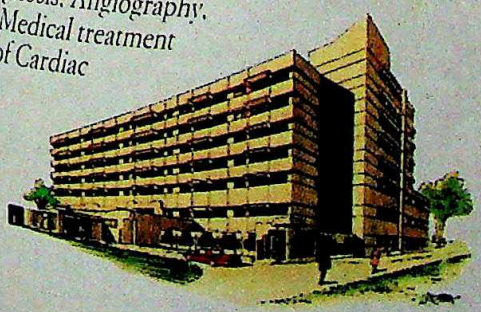

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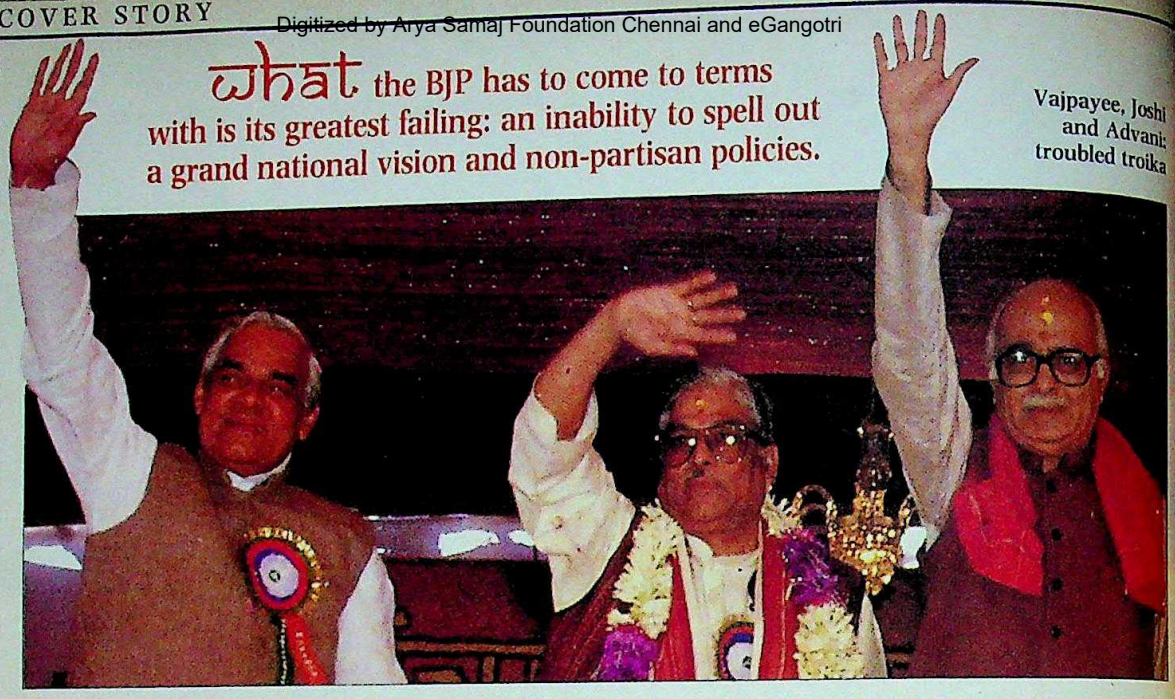
What the BJP has to come to terms with is its greatest failing: an inability to spell out a grand national vision and non-partisan policies.

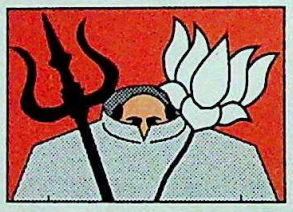


Vajpayee, Joshi and Advani: troubled troika

maintaining law and order," Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat says: "We are committed to the temple but action was taken because those who stormed the shrine were acting against the VHP guidelines."

GROWING PANGS

Credibility Crisis at Hand



THERE is no doubt that now there is a concerted effort to put Ayodhya on the backburner, and project a wider national image. BJP leaders are going on record to assert this. Says Rajasthan BJP chief Ramdas Agrawal: "People expected the temple would come up overnight. We tell them it will take time. And they have faith in our sincerity."

The BJP's recent campaign trail reflected this attitude. Joshi, Advani, Vajpayee did chant *Mandir wahan banayenge*, but did not, as in the past, urge the crowds to join in. And more time was spent discussing Kashmir, Assam, liberalisation—clear indication that the temple is no longer the only issue. As Jaswant Singh, MP, puts it: "You cannot make the political souffle rise twice from the same recipe."

But then if the temple is not the lynchpin of the BJP gameplan, what is? And even more important, what promise, above and beyond strategies and gameplans, does the BJP hold out? This question brings into relief perhaps the BJP's greatest failure: its inability to spell out a grand national vision. Time and again, the party has banked on emotive, inflammatory and transient gimmicks—rath yatras, storming of masjids—to garner support and advance its prospects. Crucially, it has not been able to mobilise support and opinion for a framework of non-partisan, non-parochial ideas and policies that have a wide-based, rational appeal.

Worse, the party has compounded this severe shortcoming by failing to even provide good governance in the states where it is in power—the one impressive promise it had made, and the one plank that could have replaced their Ayodhya card. Sunderlal Patwa runs a wreck of a government in Madhya Pradesh, and Kalyan Singh's ineptitude in Uttar Pradesh is amazing. Admits Jaswant Singh: "Ram is no substitute for governance." Also the BJP's much-trumpeted virtues of cohesion and lack of infighting, are fast being shown up as a mirage. The recent Ayodhya fiasco has shown the incipient fissures brought out in the Hindutva family by its taste of power. This time the RSS may have provided the required adhesive, but its sticking power is bound to dull with the passage of time and the emergence of multifarious ambitions.

For example, Kalyan Singh can ill-afford any confrontation with the VHP hardliners, for his own house is under duress. It is no secret in Lucknow that Health Minister Dinesh Jauhari has been organising dissent against Kalyan Singh, and that the Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kesari Nath Tripathi and state president Kalraj Misra who are waiting in the wings to grab the leadership have been wooing disgruntled MLAs. Somewhat in the manner of the Congress(I).

But if the BJP continues to present this vacuum of ideas, how long can it maintain its facade? More importantly for its larger aspirations, how long can the BJP rein in the VHP, which is a mass organisation whose adherents are not necessarily subject to the tight control exercised over the BJP cadres. For those on the VHP's temple bandwagon, glory does not necessarily mean the political ascent of the BJP but their own participation in the temple movement. They don't want the initiative, once seized, to be frittered away. Says Acharya Dharmendra, the saffron-robed patron of the Bajrang Dal in Rajasthan: "There is no going back for the BJP now. We would not compromise on the temple issue just to save the Government." Even Rajasthan Chief Minister B.S. Shekhawat admits: "We have already moved too far in the direction of the mandir."

It is truly ironic that the one issue that united the Hindutva forces of the RSS-BJP-VHP and propelled them to unprecedented success is precisely the one undermining future progress, and bringing into relief the hollowness of the combine's larger perspective. But that is what can easily happen when you ride a tiger and fail to foresee its dire consequences.

—With reports from N.K. SINGH and SOUTIK BISWAS

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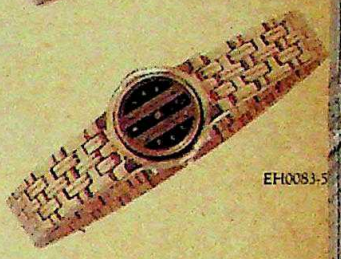
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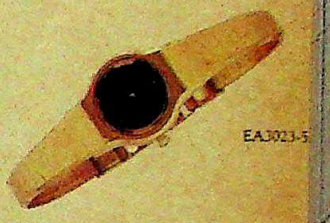
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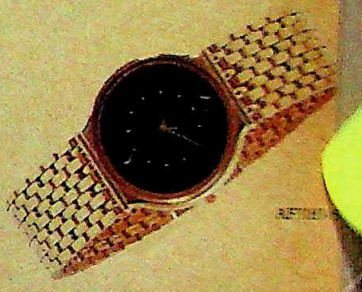

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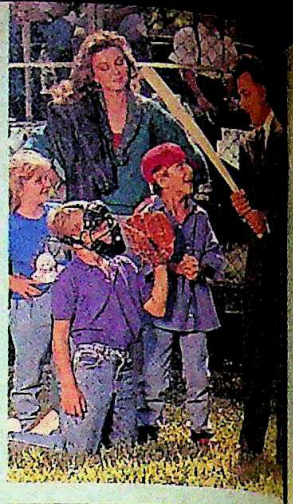

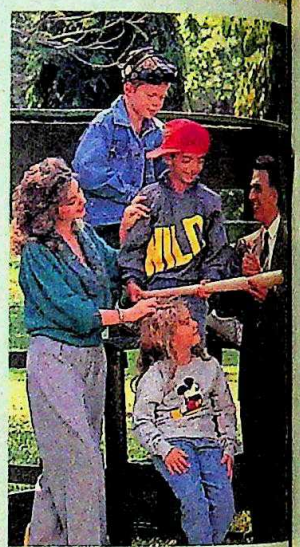

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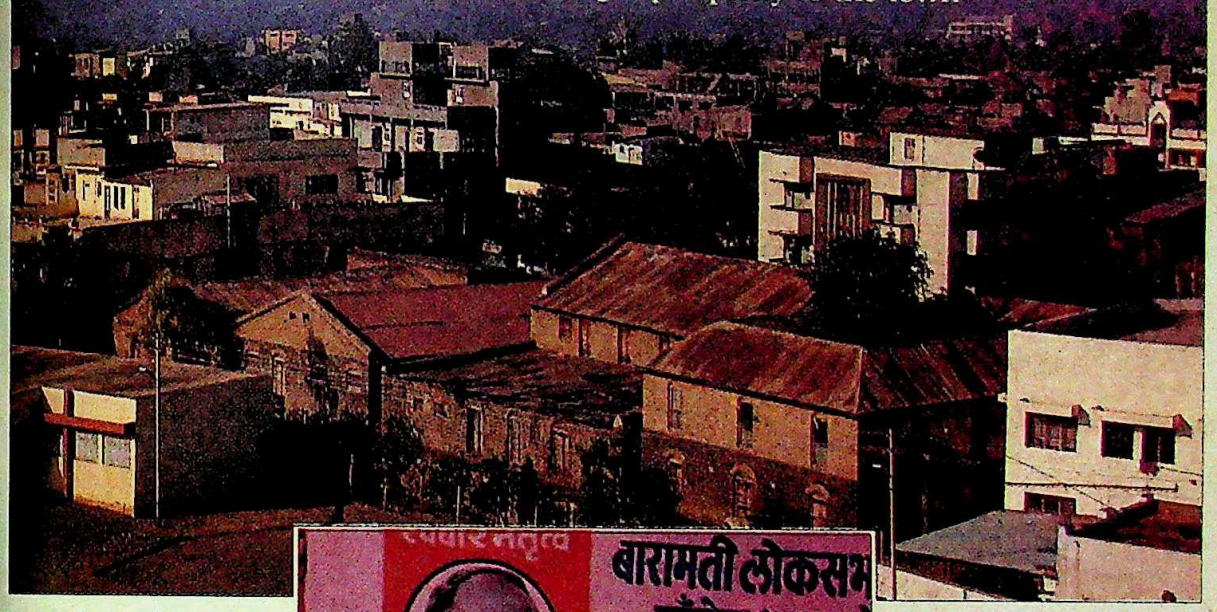
BARAMATI

Pawar Pocket Borough

The family's clout has brought prosperity to the town



Pawar, and Baramati town: parallel fortunes

By M. RAHMAN in Baramati

FOR at least two decades now, the Pawar family has dominated the life of Baramati, a small town barely 100 km south-east of Pune. Over this time, an area which was scarred by a terrible famine more than a century ago has been progressively integrated with the prosperous sugar belt of southern Maharashtra, with the growth of cooperative sugar factories, several small-scale industries and extensive vineyards.

Baramati's significance on the political and economic map of the state has increased in direct relation to the fortunes of its most famous son, Sharad Govindrao Pawar, 51. And now, as the former state chief minister, present defence minister, and potential prime minister, contemplates his return to the Lok Sabha with a massive mandate from his home constituency, the once-barren region has reached yet another turning point in its history.

Today, Baramati, thanks to Pawar's clout with business tycoons, promises to grow into a major industrial centre to rival the heavily developed Pimpri-Chinchwad belt in neighbouring Pune. The ambitious plans envelop not just Pawar's home taluka, but all the other five in the constituency. Five major and two smaller industrial estates of the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) are rapidly taking shape, even as the Centre has cleared the setting up of two new sugar cooperative factories, and a major lift irrigation scheme is planned to provide water to the region's remaining dry villages.

The list of companies investing in Baramati reads like a page out of the Who's Who of Indian industry (*see box*). And the investment: a staggering Rs 700 crore. This excludes the scores of smaller factories coming up in the area. In the 2,200-acre Baramati MIDC, for instance, cheek-by-jowl with massive steel plants are mushrooming smaller units producing everything from plastic pencils to edible oil. Over 150 such units have been planned, transforming local bigwigs into industrial entrepreneurs.

One of them is Ajit Pawar, 32, nephew and political heir to the defence minister, who is putting up the

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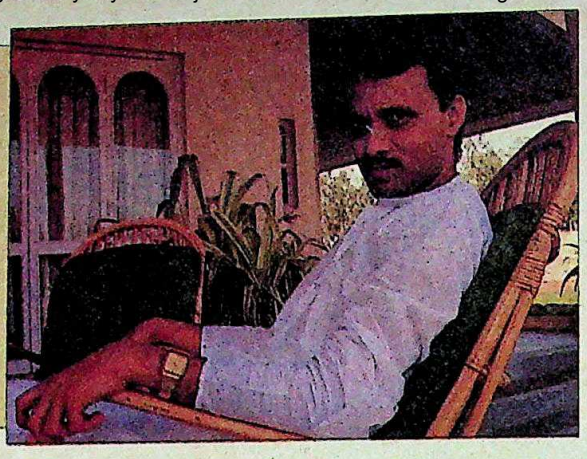
With Ajit Pawar becoming a state minister, the clan continues to grow powerful in business as well as politics.



Ajit; and (below) his edible oil plant

Rs 3.5-crore Baramati Solvent Extractions Plant for producing sunflower oil. Ajit shot to national prominence last June when he won the Baramati Lok Sabha seat, which he later vacated when his uncle moved to New Delhi. The younger Pawar was rewarded soon enough and made a minister in the state. Now uncle and nephew will be switching seats to represent Baramati in Parliament and in the state Assembly respectively. If Ajit's edible oil plant highlights the dramatic shift in the region from co-operative to private enterprise, his overnight transformation into an important state leader ensures that the Pawar family's domination in the Baramati region will continue for many years to come.

BY any reckoning, the story of Baramati's Pawar family is an exceptional saga. The father Govindrao came up in life to become the managing director of a sugar cooperative, but lost his job once, alleges Janata Dal leader Sambhaji Kakade, on corruption charges. Govindrao, who died in 1978, married twice. From his first wife, he had Pandurang who lives on a 20-acre farm near Baramati. It was his second wife, Shardabai, who dared to dream beyond the boundaries of a backward place. She broke all norms as a Maratha lady by getting elected as chairperson of the local municipal works committee in 1938, and was the driving force behind her seven sons and four daughters, all of whom acquired graduate degrees in various disciplines: law, engineering, architecture, metallurgy, agronomy.

Two of the sons harboured political ambitions. The eldest, Vasant, an advocate, was a leading figure in the Peasants and Workers Party. But he was shot dead in a land dispute and it fell upon Sharad, the sixth son, to realise his mother's ambitions. Tall and affable, the younger Pawar joined the Youth Congress and acquired a B.Com. degree from Pune's Fergusson College. "He got acquainted with Y.B. Chavan, who moulded his political career. But what distinguishes him from his mentor is that he is a daredevil. He is not afraid to take risks," says Dinkar 'Appasaheb', Sharad Pawar's elder brother, who has also played a key role in the development of the region.

Pawar had what it takes to prosper under a powerful patron's tutelage. He was first elected to the Vidhan Sabha from Baramati in 1967, soon became a minister, deserted the Congress(I) in 1977 to grab the chief ministership, continued to develop his political base as opposition leader, re-joined the Congress(I) in 1986, and less than three years later was chief minister again. Having survived attempts to dislodge him during Rajiv Gandhi's time, he is today Maharashtra's pre-eminent leader and the virtual king of Baramati.

The Pawar clan continues to grow more powerful. The family remains closely-knit, meeting every Diwali from all over the world at the clan's farmhouses at Katewadi, 10 km from Baramati town. According to Ajit, the family altogether owns over 100 acres of agricultural land in Baramati, besides poultry farms, a foundry, shares in the winery and the edible oil venture. Now with Ajit too moving to a ministerial bungalow in Bombay, it is Appasaheb and his sons who look after the family interests in Baramati.

But if Pawar left Baramati to gain political clout and access to a legendary cache of funds, other brothers, with or without his patronage, have also prospered. All third-generation family members, except for Ajit, have studiously avoided politics to make careers in business or agriculture. And Pawar's only daughter, Supriya, lives in the US with her business executive husband, working for Otis.

The Pawars' rise owes as much to mother Shardabai's vision as to son Sharad's exceptional success as a politician. So much so that today the region is like a pocket borough for the family, and Pawar is one of the few national leaders who can be certain of getting re-elected from his home constituency. ■

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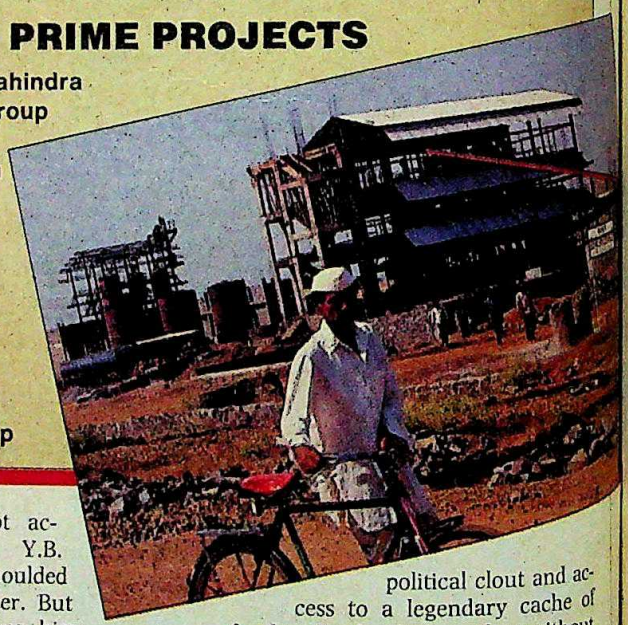

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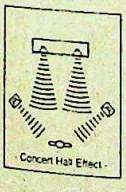

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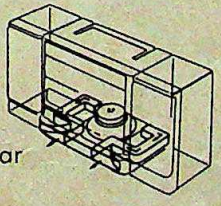

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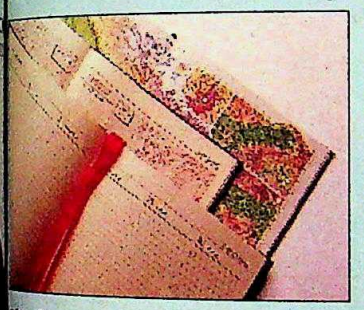

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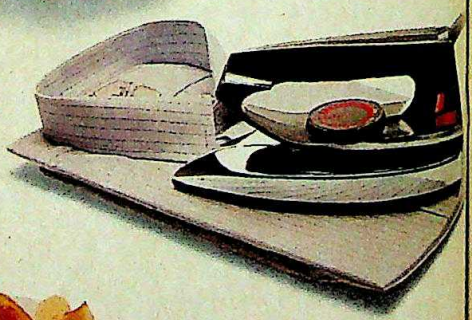

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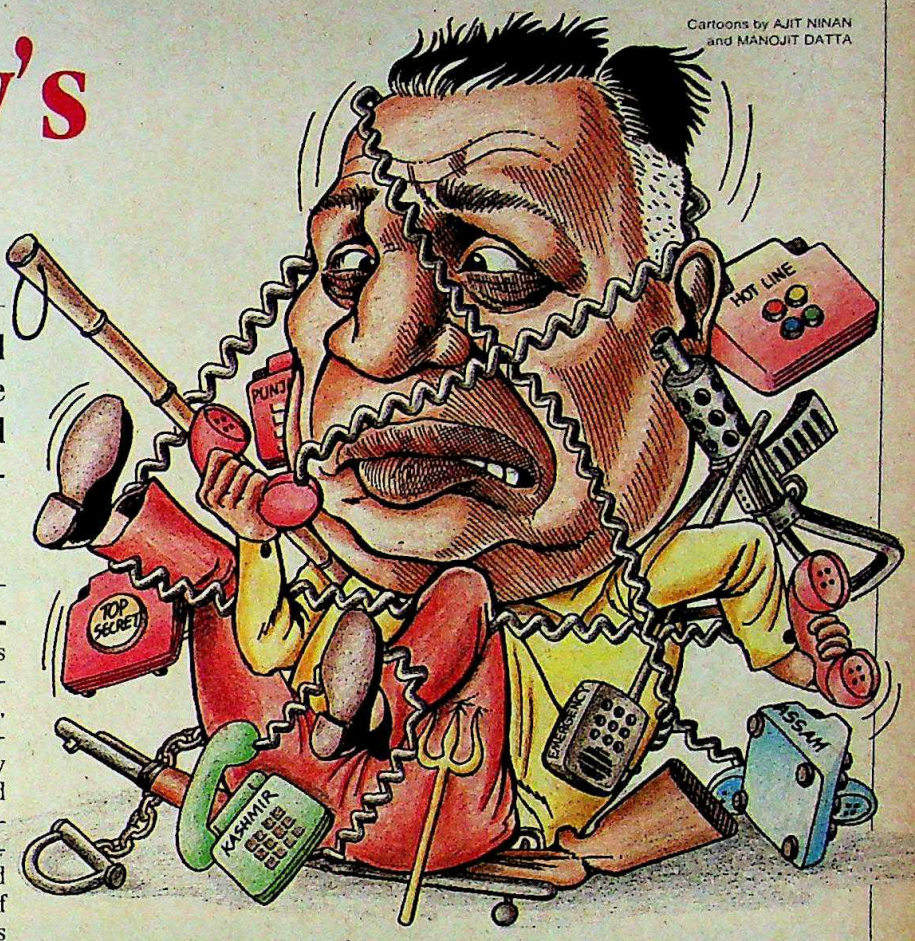
S.B. CHAVAN

Nobody's Home

A surfeit of gaffes and lack of political initiative distinguish the track record of the country's most important political minister.

By HARINDER BAWEJA



Cartoons by AJIT NINAN and MANOJIT DATTA

A cynical North Block official calls him the alibi-a-day home minister. For the killings in Punjab, he continually blames Pakistan. Kidnappings in Kashmir are obviously remote-controlled by Pakistan. And Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated because his emergence as a major political leader in the Third World had become an "irritant to some of the countries left unchallenged as superpowers".

Shouldn't the Union home minister be framing clear-cut policies to solve lingering national problems, rather than merely hunting for excuses? Shouldn't he be eliciting shades of political opinion to formulate policy? As his record on two of the most crucial issues—Punjab and Kashmir—shows, S.B. Chavan, the latest incumbent to the premier political ministry of the Union Cabinet, seems to think that crying wolf is enough.

JUST A FIGURE-HEAD

Now you see him, now you don't

THE casual indifference with which Chavan is handling his sensitive ministry has left his officials gaping. He has quite uncomplainingly let the prime minister directly handle Ayodhya. "We are, by now, used to the idea of home ministers being mere figure-heads and political fixers but never in the recent past has the ministry been so disoriented," says a veteran bureaucrat who also points out that when R.K. Bhargav was secretary, he was sometimes not even informed of the minister's engagements. There is seldom an occasion, officials say, when the minister asks for any one of them in particular. All he wants is papers to be 'put up' to him. "One does not know whether he exists," says a senior intelligence official.

There is no effort, senior bureaucrats point out, at consultation. The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs has not, in the four months that the Government has been in power, met even once to take stock of the situation in Kashmir. Nor has it thought in terms of holding an all-party meeting to discuss Punjab. As for Assam, Chavan seems to think it is the Defence Ministry's responsibility. "What is the idea of my going to Assam when the army is there?" he asks.

The only troubled spot that Chavan has bothered to visit is Srinagar. But the two-day trip he undertook to the Valley turned out to be an embarrassment. Officials and journalists were stunned to see the home minister arrive, not only with wife, son and daughter-in-law but also Rajesh Khanna in tow. What was the film star doing on a fact-finding mission? "He is a Congressman," Chavan said, fumbling for a reply. "He is here in a friendly capacity," he mumbled when questioned repeatedly. Moreover, the home minister, it was learnt, would be taking his family to Vaishno Devi.

BENIGN 'HEADMASTER'

His heart is not where Home is

IN FACT, his home front seems to score over his ministry. While his family was planning to go boating in Srinagar's Dal Lake—at a time when 18 people were being held hostage—Chavan was issuing an appeal to militants for talks. Unmindful of the grim reality of the situation. The events following the swapping of IOC Director K. Doraiswamy for nine militants—including Javed Shalla, charged with the killings of vice-chancellor Mushir-ul Haq and HMT general manager H.L. Khera—have led officials to rank him as one of the worst home ministers. Even his own partymen lampoon him as the headmaster who is shy of tackling the political aspects of his ministry. Chavan, in fact, made a faux pas when he announced in Parliament that the Government was willing to release Shalla. The state administration is still trying to recover from that folly.

While it gave the militants an

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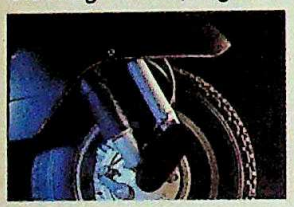

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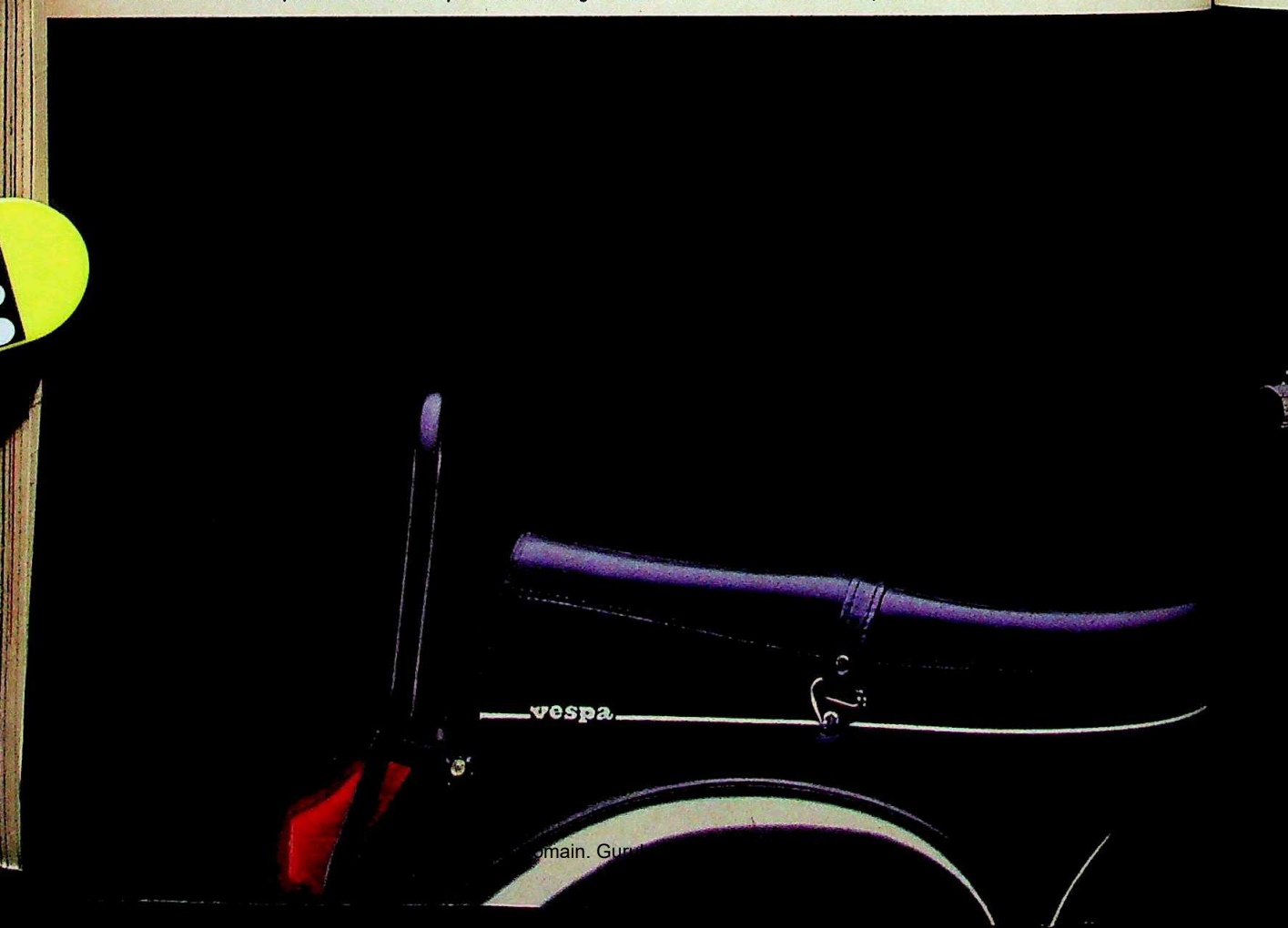

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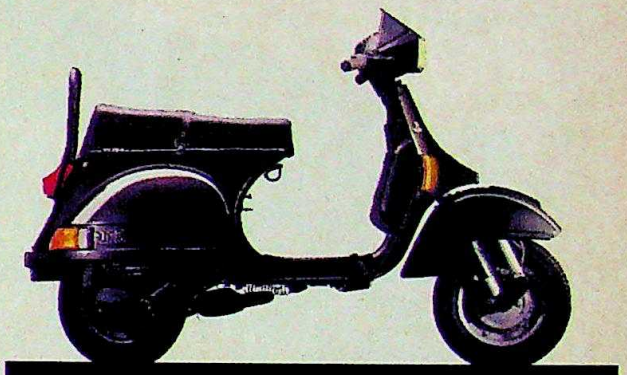

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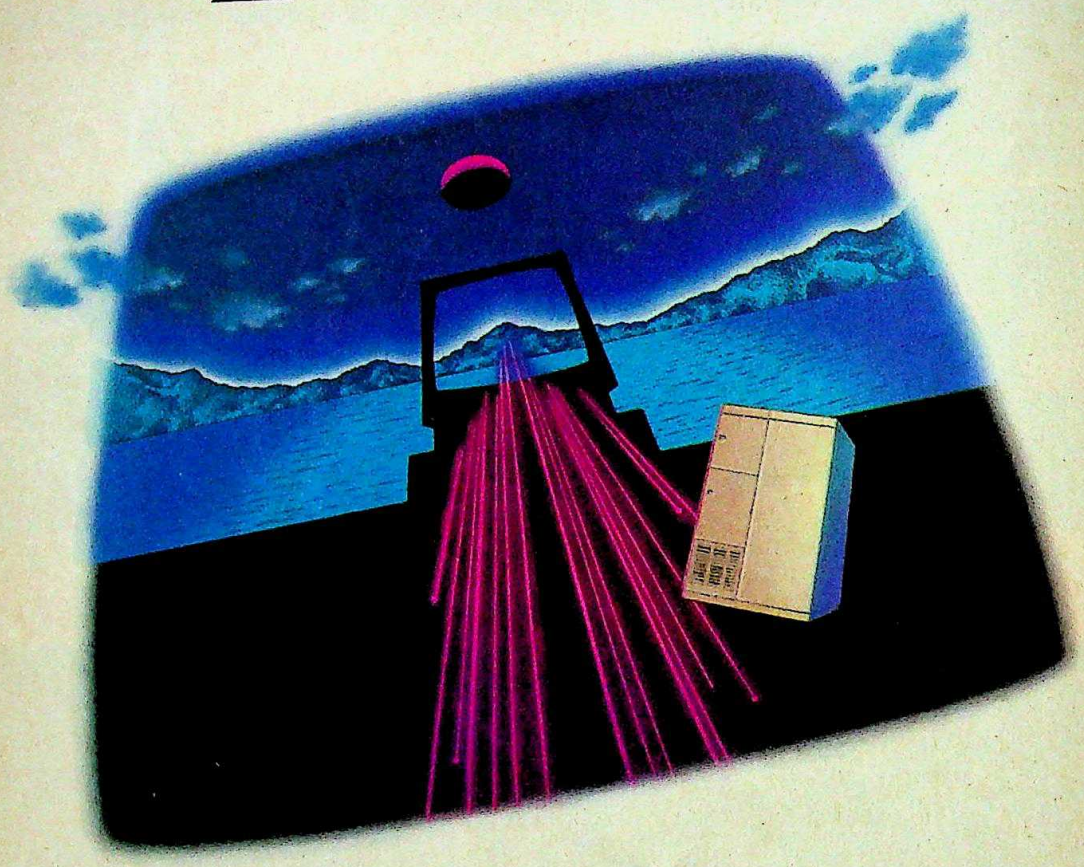

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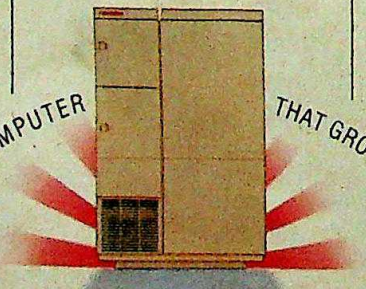

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upper hand, all that the home minister could retaliate with was promises. "We will soon announce a national policy on kidnappings" and "we will announce an action plan on Kashmir," he said before returning to Delhi. But five weeks have passed and there is no news on either. Bureaucrats in the Kashmir administration are not surprised. "Mufti Mohammed Sayeed was very subjective, but at least he was knowledgeable," says a senior official. Chavan, in fact, left all officials squirming, when for a simple question like 'Do you condemn the killing of innocent people?' he said, "I will look into the circumstances." When the home minister was told that they wanted to know whether he condemned killing of innocents by militants, he again said, "I will look into the circumstances." In fact, each time he opens his mouth you can be sure he'll drop a brick.

In Punjab, the administration is wondering who the real home minister is. Is it S.B. Chavan or Rajesh Pilot? Not only did Pilot not leave Chavan alone with the Kashmir governor "for even a minute", but also it is he who has visited Amritsar. Chavan, on the other hand, is yet to tour Punjab. While Chavan cannot make up his mind on what line to take on Kashmir, Pilot's is a one-point programme: he wants to see friend Farooq Abdullah back in the saddle. Much like the Mufti and George Fernandes, Chavan and Pilot too are pulling in different directions.

MASTER OF DELAY

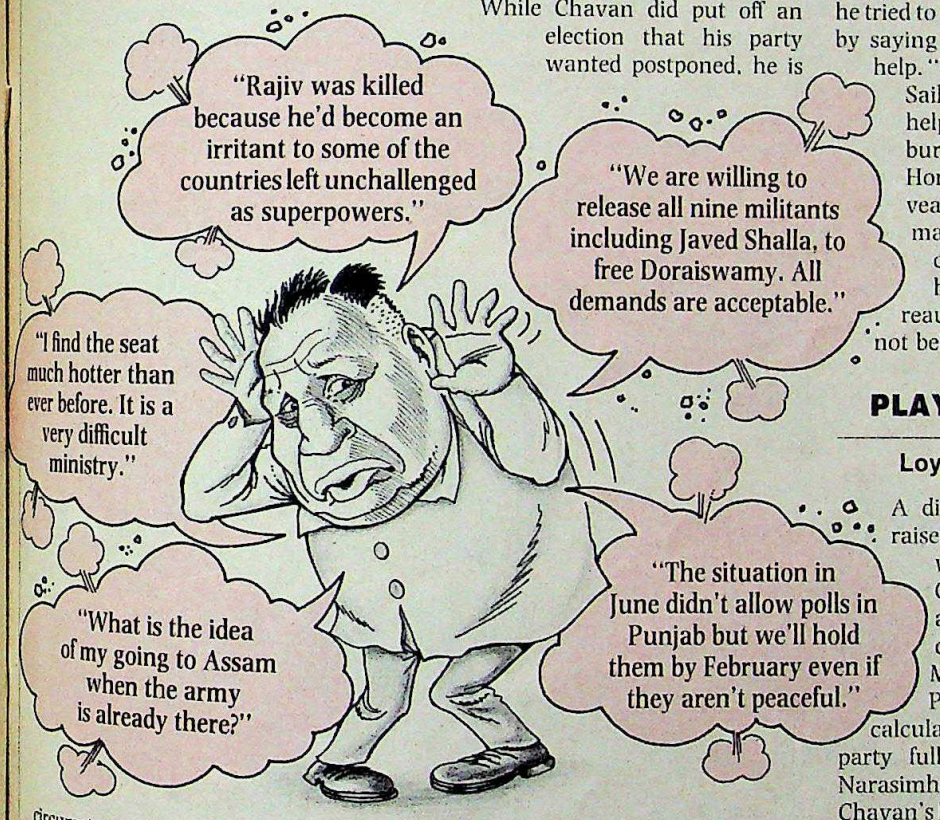
And the drift could be dangerous

IN Punjab, the only contribution Chavan has made, if it can be described thus, is to extend President's rule for another six months. He now says that elections will be held by February 25, the cut-off date, even if the army has to be called in. In his interview with INDIA TODAY, he in fact, listed that as one of his achievements as home minister.

While Chavan did put off an election that his party wanted postponed, he is blissfully unaware of the damage that has accrued. The militants are now hitting where it hurts most—at the police and their families. Chavan, in fact, had the audacity to say that "Pakistan is using every method to scuttle the electoral process in Punjab and prevent the return of a representative government".

If the home ministries under Buta Singh, the Mufti and Subodh Kant were reduced to being fire-fighting machines, now they are not even that. This task has been left to the state governors. And the Centre has neither a policy nor a plan. "There will be no going back," maintains Chavan, regarding the Centre's plan to hold elections in Punjab. But the Home Ministry is working to push the proposed amendment in the Representation of People's Act, ostensibly meant to prevent the participation of secessionist elements. What the ministry wants to do is further delay the elections.

There has been no effort to involve the militants in a dialogue or see them win assembly seats. These are risks worth taking, for in Punjab, at least, the militants are fighting for a share of the political power. But then Chavan has already burnt his fingers in Assam by letting Hiteswar Saikia release 500 ULFA militants. Chavan finally had to send in the army to halt ULFA's free run. But here too he surprised officials when he tried to palm off blame for the move by saying that Saikia had asked for help. "What would he have done if Saikia had not asked for Central help. Would he have let Assam burn?" asks an official in the Home Ministry, who also reveals that for the first time in many years ministry officials can pack their bags and go home by 6.30 p.m. The 'bureaucratic home minister' does not believe in working late.



PLAY-SAFE SURVIVOR

Loyalty is the password

A disinterested home minister raises obvious questions. Why was Chavan chosen? Rajiv Gandhi needed Buta Singh as a decoy. V.P. Singh had his own reasons for having the Mufti as his home minister. P.V. Narasimha Rao has also calculated his move. Heading a party full of prospective premiers, Narasimha Rao can be sure of Chavan's loyalty. And fealty and ineptitude are better than having Arjun Singh or Sharad Pawar as home ministers. Chavan's cradentials can hardly be doubted. He has held the portfolios of home, defence and finance.

In his defence, Chavan says: "I have inherited a legacy and it will take time for me to clear the decks." But it is probably his shrewd sense of survival which keeps him from getting enmeshed in intricate problems which he knows cannot be easily solved. Senior bureaucrats who have worked with him swear that one cannot accuse him of ignoring his own interests. The home minister seems to believe that it is better to be dubbed mediocre rather than a failure. So what then, if he hasn't been able to hit a home run? ■

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1991 BY-ELECTIONS

Star Strategy

With the by-election stakes being far higher than the number of seats suggests, INDIA TODAY tracked the star campaigners to analyse their campaign strategy and gauge the response.

P.V. NARASIMHA RAO

Message of Maturity

FROM the circular windows of the Air Force MI8 helicopter flying high above the ground, it appeared as if the meeting below was going to be poorly attended. Barring a few, most of the wood-fenced enclosures seemed like empty corrals. Over the din, that sounded like a dozen electricity generators at work, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao was informed by his staff that the crowd gathered was only around 2,000.

Clad in white kurta and dhoti and seated in front, Rao's face was as usual—completely inscrutable. But he must have been disappointed. The Haveri meeting on November 9 in Karnataka's Dharwad district was to kick off his campaign for what was turning out to be a crucial Lok Sabha by-election for him and his party. For the first time he was being projected as the Congress(I)'s new mass-based leader—the man expected to replace the Nehru-Gandhi family as the party's biggest vote catcher.

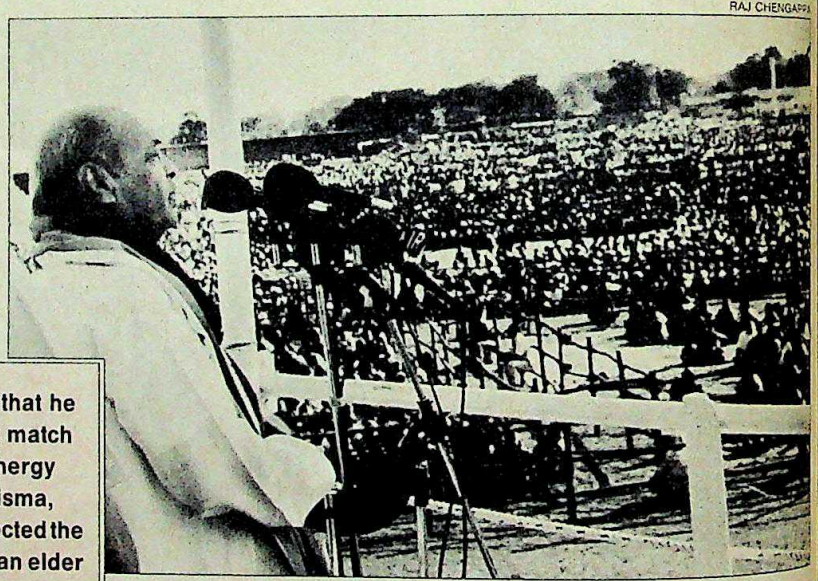
If Rao was breaking the tradition of prime ministers not campaigning for by-elections, it was because there were other factors at stake as well. If the Congress(I) managed to bag most of the 15 Lok Sabha seats being contested, it would bring his party closer to attaining a simple majority in the Lower House. It would also be a signal that the electorate was appreciative of his government's performance thus far. And while Rao had decided against campaigning in Nandyal in Andhra Pradesh—where he is standing for elections—other party leaders wanted him to tour the remaining 14 constituencies.

Right from the moment Rao alighted from the helicopter, it was clear that his style was going to be radically different from that of the late Rajiv Gandhi. Rajiv used to exude youthful energy as he swept through constituencies with dynastic arrogance. He usually shook hands with people, broke the cordons, ran up the steps of any election podium, waving vigorously to the crowds, smiling all the while and throwing garlands to women.

Rao, on the other hand, was hardly ever demonstrative. Security arrangements ensured that the crowds would get nowhere near him. Only key local Congress(I) leaders were allowed to greet him personally. Rao then walked measuredly up the rostrum hardly ever glancing at the 80-foot-high cut-outs of Rajiv and him close by or at the crowd below. No smile broke his face as he greeted the crowds with a lukewarm wave.

Yet, as Rao spoke it became clear the kind of image that he

RAJ CHENGAPPA



Knowing that he could not match Rajiv's energy and charisma, Rao projected the image of an elder statesman.

was keen on projecting. He knew he could not match Rajiv's youthfulness, charisma or inheritance. Instead, given his age, what he was looking for was the halo of an elderly statesman able to rule maturely.

Where Rao scored was in his ability to speak Hindi with a diction, command and conviction that Rajiv clearly lacked. As he warmed up, his tone became chatty and his language colloquial, drawing laughs and even applause. While explaining his economic policies he said: "I have stopped all this licensing business. I have opened the doors completely. *Maine bolt-wolt bhi phenk diya* (I have thrown out even the bolts)."

Meanwhile, the crowd that had initially looked meagre had swelled to a good 7,000—most were late as they thought the prime minister wouldn't be on time for the meeting. And as Rao spoke he seemed

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build some rapport with the people. As G. Madhav, a farm labourer, said: "He seems a good, old man. Someone we can trust and respect."

Rao's next halt was Nanded in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district. The Special Protection Group officers had in fact advised the prime minister against campaigning here because it was a known base for Sikh terrorists. But he brushed aside doubts and the crowds responded overwhelmingly. He drew around 30,000 people—about the number that came out to receive Rajiv earlier. While he spoke without a bullet-proof fibre-glass shield, two bodyguards or "bullet catchers" as they are known flanked him.

By now the Congress(I) leader had taken to the audience and he seemed in his element, interspersing his speech with homilies that had the crowd listening with rapt attention. He told them simply: "I need the 15 seats more than other parties. What difference would it make to the BJP or the Janata Dal if they got some more seats. But to the Congress(I) it will end this business of minority government and the country would be more stable." Then he added: "They say that Rajivji and Indiraji didn't campaign in by-elections. But they didn't need the 15 seats like I do now."

As a relaxed Rao told INDIA TODAY in his special Air Force Boeing 737 later that evening: "My task is to convey to the people the logic of giving us these 15 seats so as to give us a majority. And I think they are alert to this and are sympathetic to the Congress(I)." He deliberately steered clear of the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi and Mandal Commission issues in his meetings. His reason: "I think they're on their way to a solution and these issues should not continue as divisive factors in the election and affect voting patterns." And he cleverly avoided speaking about unabated price-rise.

More importantly for the Congress(I), its president turned out to be a shrewd campaigner for the party. Knowing what to emphasise, when to bring in Rajiv's name, which issues to broach and yet steer clear of appearing a street-fighter, rabble rouser or an outright politician. These are new-found qualities that are likely to stand both his party and Rao in good stead for the real electoral battle that lies in the years ahead.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

V.P. SINGH

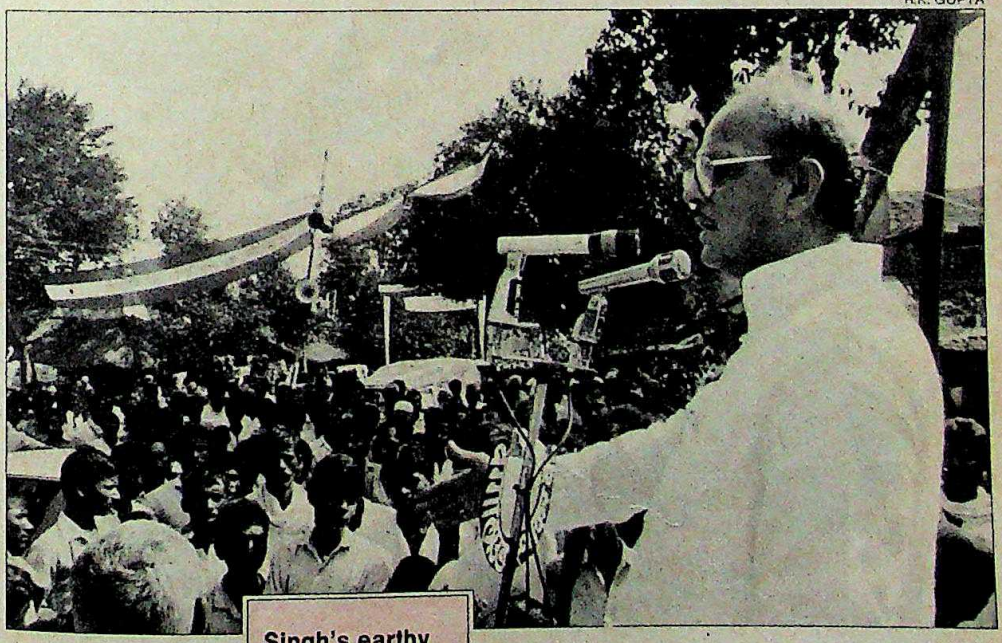
A Personal Crusade

VOTERS in the Amethi constituency could be forgiven for presuming that this by-election bout was between the 'Captain' and the 'Raja'. Former prime minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, as is his wont, targeted Amethi as his personal crusade, much to the discomfort of Congress(I) nominee Satish Sharma. And also, one might add, the discomfort of Sharma's rival, the Janata Dal's Ram Singh.

Clearly enjoying what he does best, V.P. Singh set up a high-voltage campaign concentrated mainly in the rural areas and among the deprived sections. Up at dawn every morning, he hit the dirt tracks at a spanking pace, foraging deep into the countryside and addressing between 20 and 25 meetings a day. The day would begin with a brief strategy session with aides Waseem Ahmad and Santosh Bhartiya. The sessions involved analysing the previous day with some hi-tech help—a Casio diary. Doubling as campaign manager and chief campaigner, he assigned Rajmohan Gandhi, Prakash Ambedkar and Chandrajit Yadav to camp in Amethi. Working to a gameplan, the Raja of Manda ran a segment-wise campaign intended to cover a majority of the villages and kasbas in each of the assembly segments, deliberately contrasting his accessible style with the impersonal campaign of Satish Sharma.

Which is why he planned to spend most of the available campaign time in Amethi, moving out only for a day to campaign in Bihar and Karnataka. It wasn't an altogether smooth passage. His arrest on the way to Faizabad may have provided the campaign a boost but his foray into Bihar was lacklustre. Arriving in Barh to address an election meeting with local Janata Dal candidate Nitish Kumar, a group of people, mostly young men, sprang up from the front row, shouted anti-V.P. Singh slogans and waved black flags and *chappals*. The chaos was short-lived, but the message was daunting: his charisma is on the wane. His campaign too was muted. And missing were the hordes of enthusiastic outriders that accompanied him everywhere previously.

R.K. GUPTA



Singh's earthy humour is his biggest asset, especially when he targets Satish Sharma's lifestyle.

But the Raja, characteristically, was unfazed. "We have deliberately kept it low-key. The important thing is to get the message across to the electorate," he said. Whether he succeeded in that is debatable. At most places, the response was encouraging but not over-enthusiastic. But the Raja's electoral sights were also set lower. These elections, he told people, would not make

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or break the Government at the Centre or in Lucknow. But he asked them to vote sensibly as it would serve as a rap across the knuckles to those in power.

Significantly, the mantra of social justice was missing from his speeches. Instead, the rural appeal focused on price rise, communalism and the withdrawal of fertiliser subsidy. His rustic touch was, as usual, his biggest campaign asset. Delivered in the local variant of the Awadhi, the speeches were short and to the point. He used local imagery which made a difference. For instance, when he lashed out at Satish Sharma's lifestyle and his infamous swimming pool: *"Mamla saaf hai. Jey swimming pool me nahath ho Sharma ke vote dey dei, aur jey pokhra mei ya kuan par uo sab Ram Singh ka."* (The issue is clear. Those who bathe in swimming pools can vote for Sharma. Those who bathe in ponds or wells should vote for Ram Singh.)

Not once did he mention the Gandhi family, choosing instead to focus on the local vs the outsider, common man vs elite themes. "Ram Singh is one of your own. To meet him you don't have to go all the way to Delhi to make an appointment. But he does have a drawback—no swimming pools with Italian tiles," he said to the delight of the crowd.

And while the verdict will wait for the final tally, it is clear that the Raja is playing for high stakes. Even if the Janata Dal finishes a respectable second—BJP's Madan Mohan Singh is no pushover—he will have succeeded in re-establishing himself as a key contender in the battle for leadership in the cow belt.

—JAVED M. ANSARI in Amethi

L.K. ADVANI

A Change of Image

BARELY one year ago, he came riding a fiery chariot, leaving mass hysteria in his wake. L.K. Advani's Ram Rath resembled a holy wave engulfing everything in its path. The reverence was awesome. Hordes of people jostled one another to touch his feet. The religious fervour that Advani's yatra had created, helped the party make a Hanuman-type leap across the political ocean, capturing 119 seats in the Lok Sabha and steamrolling the party into power in Uttar Pradesh.

But last week when Advani arrived in Gaya to campaign for the by-elections, the aggressive mien and incendiary Hindutva fervour were missing. L.K. Advani, Laxman's common man look-alike, was back in electoral fashion. Though the party's strong following remained intact, the frenzy was no longer there. There was no cavalcade of saffron-scarved youth screaming 'Jai Shri Ram' anywhere along the route on which Advani's Maruti-1000 travelled. The hysterical electoral mantra of 1989—*"Mandir wahin banayenge, Jahan Ram ka janm hua tha"*—was missing. The issue in this by-election, he told the gathering at Muslim-dominated towns like Sherghati, Tekari, and Gaya, the BJP stronghold, was that the people had to choose between the disintegrating parties and the BJP, a party of the future. He cited Janata Dal leaders' own statements saying that "the creation of the Janata Dal was a silly experiment".

The Hindutva fervour was in abeyance as the BJP leader projected a more moderate image.

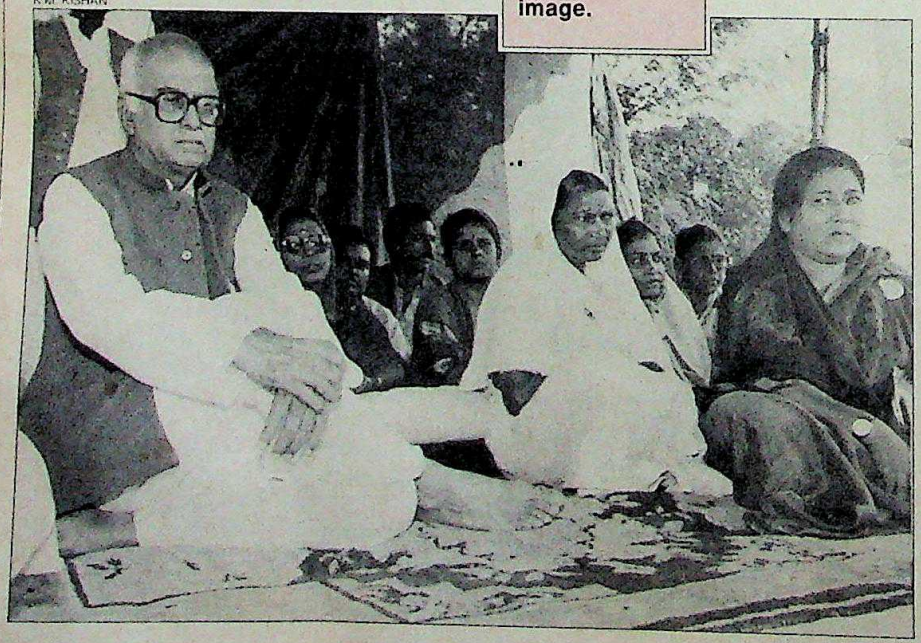
Ayodhya was no longer the main theme. No more did he ask people to take a holy pledge that the mandir would be built there come what may. "Ayodhya," said Advani, "is not a religious issue. This isn't against Muslims. It's a symbol of cultural unity." He assured the Muslims there would be no confrontation and the structure would be relocated 5 km away with their help. To reassure the minority community, he harped on their safety if the BJP came to power at the Centre. "Unfortunately, all parties treat Muslims not as human beings but as voters," he said.

Compared to the sea of saffron that greeted Advani's rath last year, the people this time were subdued. And deliberately so. The strategy was simple: to change the party's image from its rabble-rousing, communalist stance to one of moderation and discipline. The objective: to ensure the BJP gets enough votes to enable it to label the by-elections as a people's referendum. "The result of this election won't change the Government in Delhi, but it will show the people's political direction." Dismissing the minority government as one on daily wages, his aim was to project the BJP as the only stable political entity.

Clearly, the canny Advani was preparing the ground for a mid-term poll. Or the next general elections. The reassurance to the minorities and the humble-supplicant act, all seemed tailored to moving in that direction. Which is why the visage of a stern schoolmaster broke into a sly, half-smile when the crowd shouted the words that were music to his ears: "The next prime minister, Lal Kishen Advani."

—FARZAND AHMED

K.M. KISHAN



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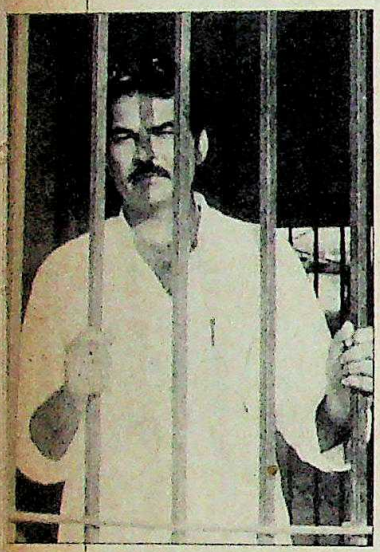
Campaign Carousel

Though low-key, the campaign had its share of colour and humour. Samples.

Problem Prisoner

■ It's becoming quite the fashion these days. D.P. Yadav, the moustachioed don from Uttar Pradesh, is quite enjoying campaigning from a prison cell. Not that it's cramping his politi-

Yadav: back to the wall

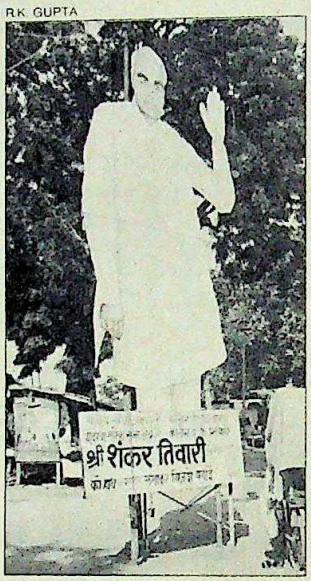


cal campaign. The SJP candidate from the Bulandshahr assembly seat—who was arrested two months ago—has been proudly posing for photographers in jail. Even his campaign posters show the don behind bars. But without Mulayam Singh's protective cover and the BJP Government gunning for him, D.P. Yadav literally has his back to the wall.

Billboard Battle

■ It's a different kind of electoral war in Jaswantnagar. A cardboard one. The skyline is obscured by 30-odd larger-than-life cut-outs. The cut-out war for the assembly poll began with a 15-ft-high image of Mulayam Singh Yadav. Then, his Congress(I) rival, Darshan Singh, came up with a 20-ft cut-out. The BSP's Kanshi Ram's is a lofty 25-ft high. But the winner seems to be the Congress(I)'s Etawah Lok Sabha candidate, Sri Shanker Tiwari, with a 30-ft cut-out. Mulayam Singh is now working on a cut-out 45-ft high. The bill-board battle's really hotting up.

R.K. GUPTA



Mulayam and Tiwari's cut-outs: sky's the limit

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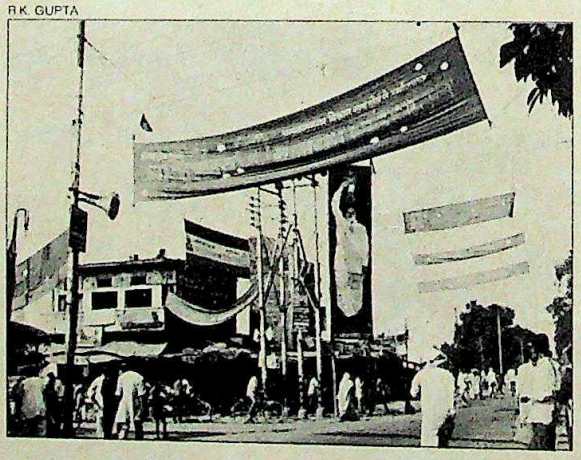

Lucky Draw

■ Ho Hum. Another son rises on the political firmament. This time it's Ajay Singh, son of Human Resource Minister Arjun Singh. Ajay, who is standing from his father's former constituency, Churhat—better known for the infamous lottery scandal—is making sure the luck of the draw favours him this time. The BJP is also playing for high stakes. Chief Minister

R.C. SAHU

Ajay: his father's son

Sunderlal Patwa used Churhat as a launching pad for his party's campaign and dangled some tempting poll promises. Says Ajay: "People are not going to be misguided by these antics." The implication being that his own don't count.

● ***Kauno achcha aur imandar afsar jab transfer hoi jath hai, tab aisen thode hoith hai ki okar chaprasi okari jagah lai ley.*** **(When a good officer gets transferred out does his chaprasi succeed him?)**

■ **RAM SINGH, the Janata Dal candidate from Amethi, referring to his rival Captain Satish Sharma**

● **An elected representative is to his electorate what a lover is to his beloved.**

■ **MULAYAM SINGH YADAV in Jaswantnagar, from where he is contesting the assembly seat**

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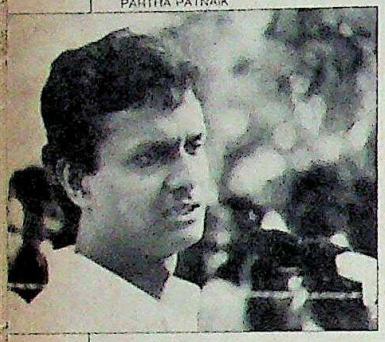
Minor Mess

■ Tathagata Satpathy, the Janata Dal nominee for the Dhenkanal Lok Sabha seat, faces some serious problems. More than the fact that he has a formidable rival in former cabinet minister and royal scion K.P. Singh Deo, it is his playboy

PARTHA PATNAIK



Satpathy: engaging

image that is his main drawback. Two months ago, he eloped with a minor girl and was subsequently detained by the police following a complaint lodged by the girl's mother. Satpathy has since got himself engaged to the girl and mended fences with her mother.

Since the marriage is yet to take place, the debonair Satpathy cannot take her along on his campaign. But to convince the voters that his intentions are honourable, he has no option but to introduce her to the electorate. To find a way out of the embarrassing dilemma, Satpathy has been holding informal get-togethers at district towns where he presents his fiancee to the curious citizens in the hope that the good word about him will get around.

Crowning Glory

■ It's classic Laloo Prasad Yadav. When it comes to politics, the maverick chief minister has no inhibitions about whose help he takes to win the polls. His latest catch: the dreaded outlaw **Dularchand Yadav**—who has at least 15 criminal cases pending against him.

Laloo, in a well-publicised ceremony, drafted the notorious criminal into the Janata Dal last fortnight. The quid pro quo? Dularchand will campaign for the Janata Dal candidate, Nitish Kumar, in the Barh Lok Sabha constituency, where the outlaw has considerable clout. Dularchand promptly showed his appreciation by crowning the chief minister with a *pagri* in a grand ceremony. In other words, putting a reward on the chief minister's head.

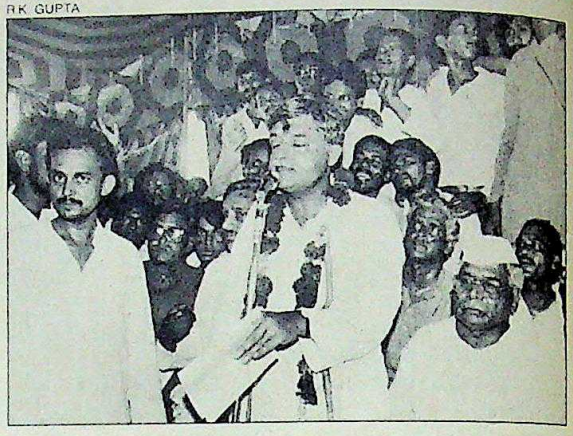
Laloo with Dularchand

K.M. KISHAN

Accent Agony

■ Election campaigns aren't just a matter of dotting the electoral I's and crossing the T's. With **Satish**

R.K. GUPTA



Sharma: anglicised

Sharma it's more a question of dropping the H's. Every time Sharma refers to Amethi in his anglicised accent, he pronounces it as Ameti—noticeably skipping the 'h' from the name.

However, the local voters aren't amused in the least. In fact, when the high-profile Congress(I) candidate was addressing an election meeting recently, a youngster in the crowd was overheard saying: "We should tell him that we'll vote for him only when he starts pronouncing the name of the constituency properly."

Name Calling

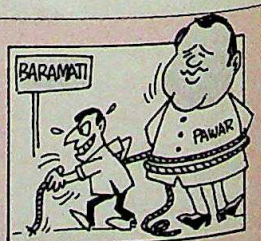
■ What's in a name? Well, a lot actually. Especially if you were to go by the political slugfest in Puri. The Janata Dal has distorted Congress(I) candidate **Gadahar Mishra's** name to Gadha Mishra. Certainly not very complimentary as *gadha* means an ass. The scathing election graffiti hasn't spared anyone. The BJP's Bamo Mishra has been made into Baman—Oriya for dwarf. But the rudest epithet is reserved for Chandi Mishra: his name is being misspelt as Randi, which means prostitute. Clearly, a rose by any other name isn't exactly the same.

● **This time it seems to be developing into a one-sided love-affair. The "beloved" is all set to marry someone else.**

■ **An elderly farmer's retort to Yadav in Jaswantnagar**

● **In this tug-of-war, nobody seems to be pulling the rope from the other end.**

■ **APPASAHEB PAWAR, Sharad's elder brother**



● **If Narasimha Rao too fails to bring prosperity to Nandyal, even god will not be able to do anything for us.** ■ **A rickshaw puller in Nandyal**

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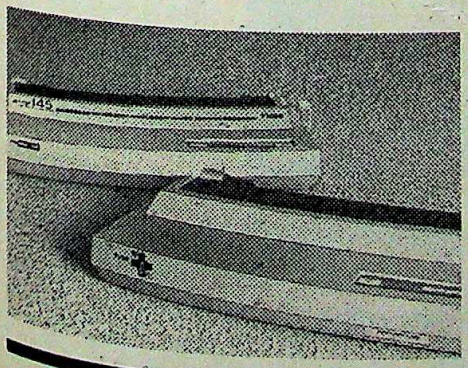

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SHIV SENA

King of the Jungle

With his attention-grabbing actions, Bal Thackeray proves yet again that it is his party and not the BJP which calls the militant Hindu tune in Maharashtra.

By M. RAHMAN

BAL THACKERAY, the controversial and charismatic chief of the Shiv Sena, is not one to let grass grow under his feet. Even as the media speculated on whether the BJP was edging past the Sena on the popularity charts, Thackeray launched a campaign against the proposed Indo-Pakistan series. And as his workers dug up the green expanse of Wankhede Stadium in Bombay, his 25-year-old party hit the headlines once again.

At a massive rally at Shivaji Park, the 65-year-old 'Hindu Hriday Samrat' declared the stadium would be burned down if the Pakistan cricket team played. With Union Defence Minister Sharad Pawar having threatened to "teach Pakistan a lesson" for supporting terrorism, many wonder whether the two politicians, known to be close, are working in tandem.

When Pakistan called off the tour, Thackeray organised another rally, celebrating the party's 'victory' by setting alight a huge effigy of a Pakistani terrorist. There was little doubt that the Shiv Sena had snatched the limelight from the BJP to present itself as the more militant, nationalistic party. And in response to charges that he was activating his party at the street level to seize the initiative from the BJP, Thackeray declared: "I have always believed in militancy. I took up the Pakistan issue because it is of national significance, and not because I felt I must do something."

HEMANT PITHWA

Youth wing burning effigy of a Pakistani terrorist

The BJP may be embarrassed by the Sena supremo's impulsive actions but it desperately needs his crowd-pulling ability.

It is this bare-knuckled element in the Shiv Sena that sections of the BJP were wary of when an alliance was struck up in Maharashtra to take on the Congress(I). Even last month, BJP Rajya Sabha member Jaswant Singh publicly expressed his reservations about the alliance. Yet, until it hitched its fortunes to the Sena bandwagon, the BJP was a weak force in Maharashtra. And although Thackeray's magnetism has drawn support for the BJP, his impulsive actions have been a perennial cause of embarrassment.

Last fortnight, Thackeray placed the BJP in another awkward spot when the party had to explain the ransacking of the office of the Marathi eveninger, *Mahanagar*, which criticised the Sena leader's anti-Pakistan tirade. This was followed by an attack on four journalists protesting the Sena's terror tactics. Thackeray denied that Sainiks were responsible, but BJP leaders failed to carry conviction when they condemned attacks on the media while insisting there was no proof of Sena involvement.

The maverick Sena chief insists the alliance is safe. Said he: "We may have some differences but there is no serious hitch." There can, however, be no denying that the differences are now beginning to spill over on to the streets. Before the Bombay University Students' Council elections, Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad boys were allegedly beaten up by students belonging to the Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Sena, which is led by Thackeray's nephew Raj. In the ensuing conflict between the two student

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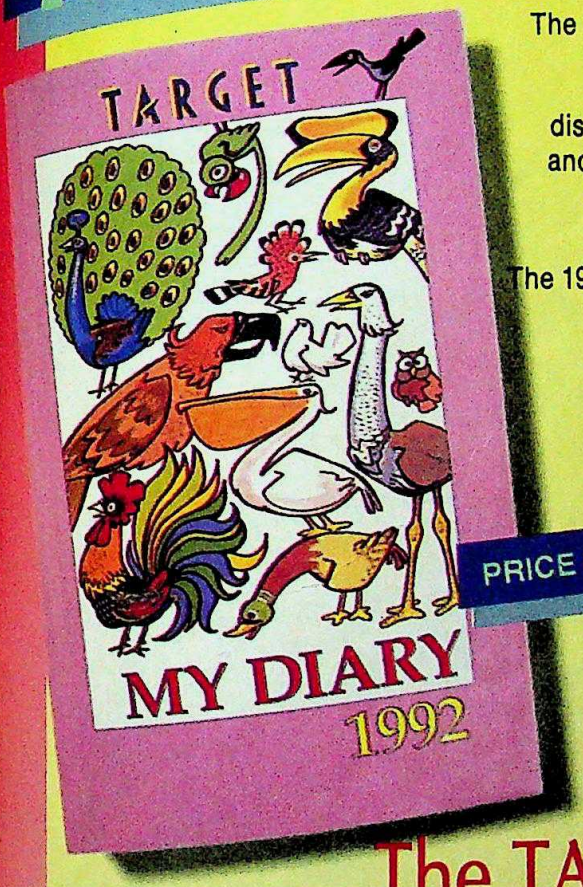

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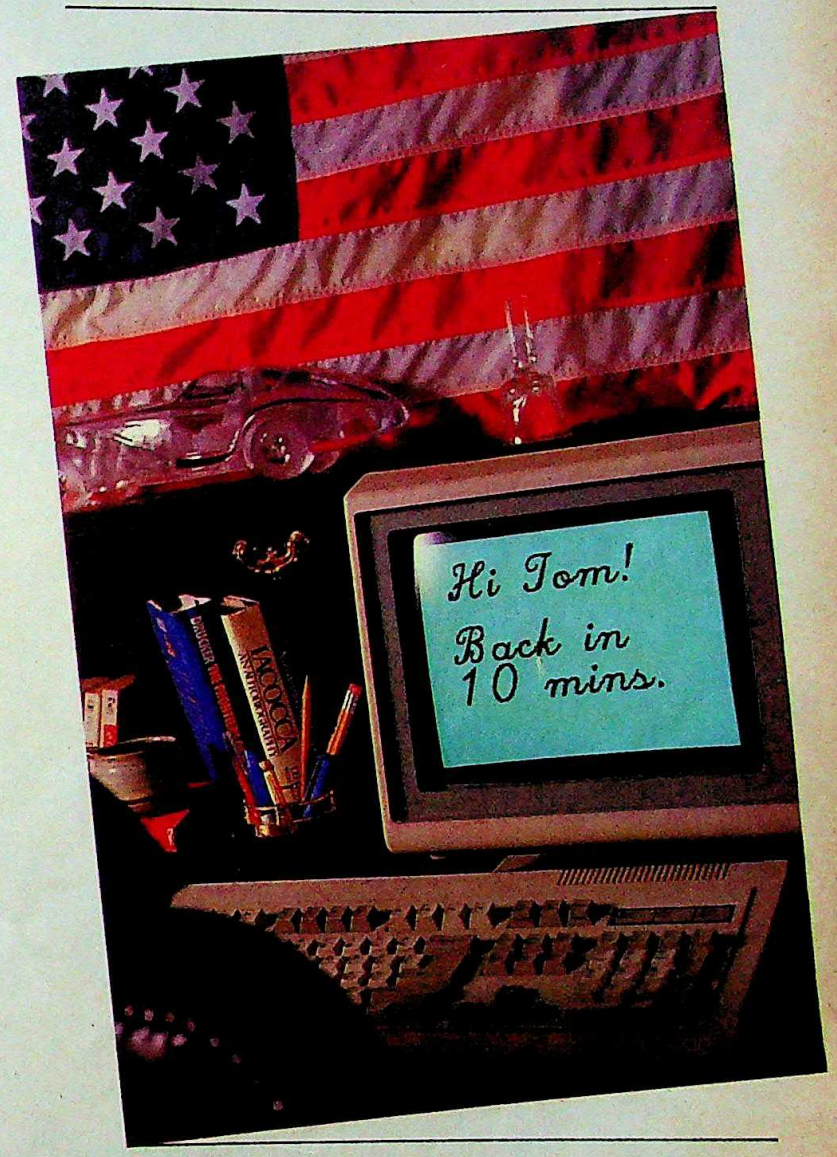

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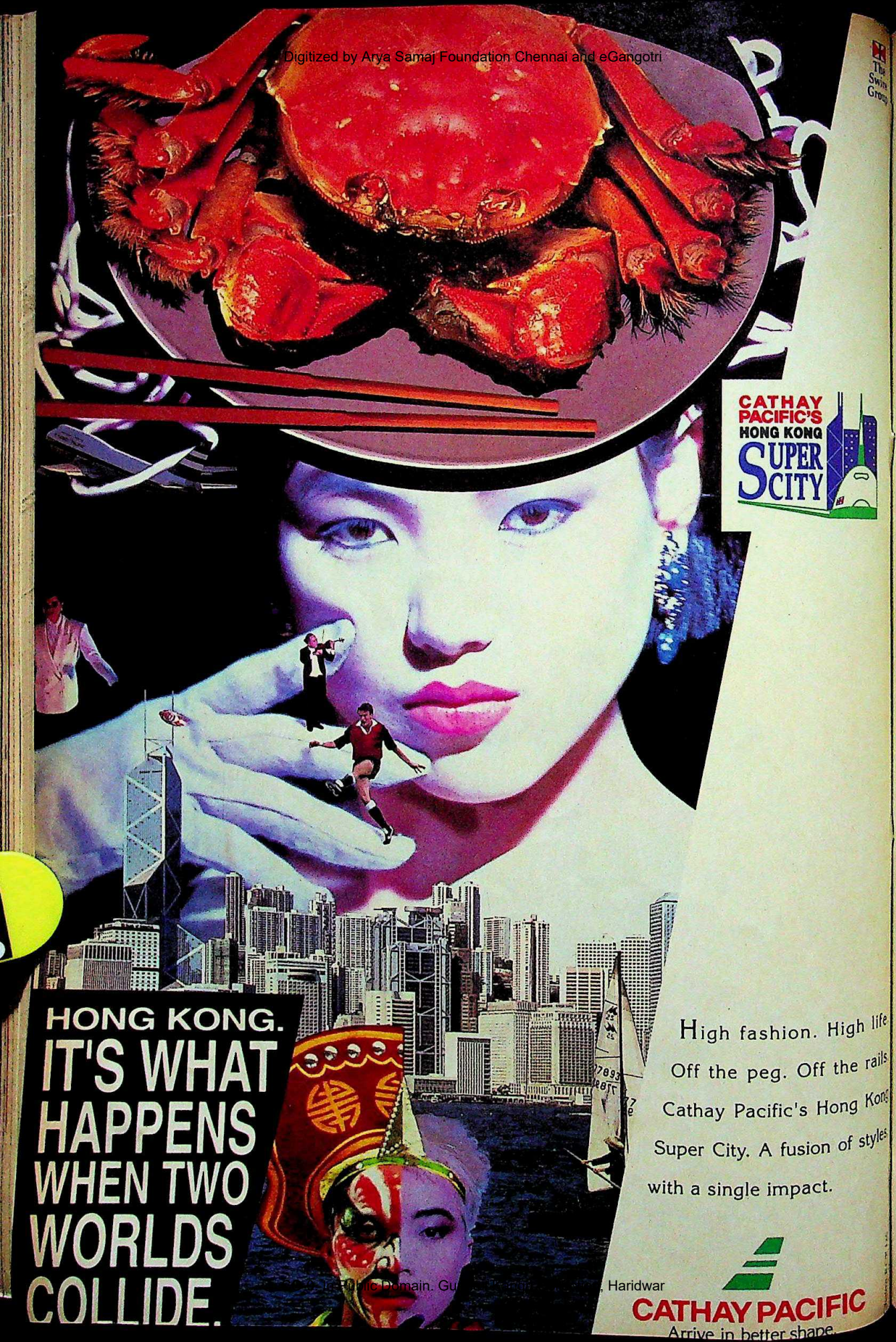

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groups, the NSUI waltzed to victory in the university polls.

On another front, both parties organised separate morchas against price rise in Aurangabad on the same day. The BJP's protest reportedly had greater impact than the Sena's, even though it is Thackeray's party which is in majority in the city municipal corporation, had bagged the parliamentary seat last June, and managed to wrench control of the city from the Congress(I).

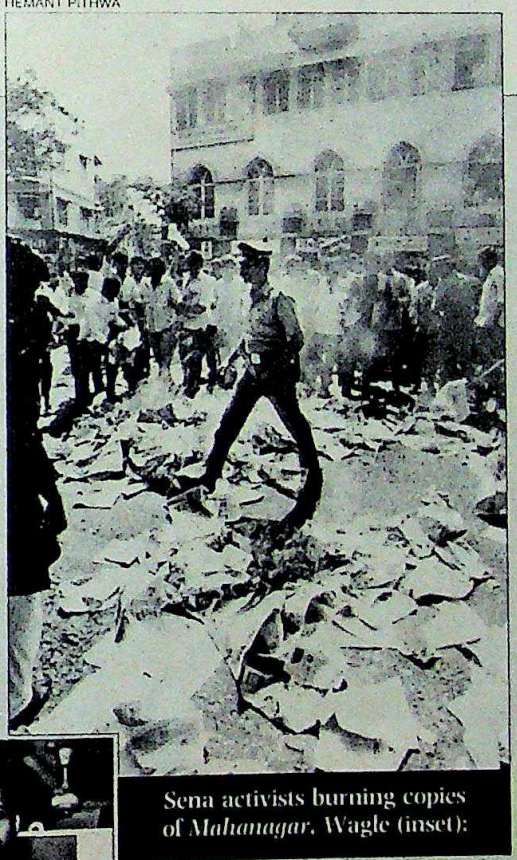
BUT there is little doubt that the Sena is still the senior partner in the alliance. In the Vidhan Bhavan, it is Thackeray's men who call the shots—Manohar Joshi is leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, while colourful crusader Pramod Nawalkar leads the Opposition in the Legislative Council. Bombay's mayor too, is a Shiv Sainik. Then the Bharatiya Kamgar Sena, the Sena's trade union wing, continues to grow, a process which was hastened after the collapse of the historic millworkers' strike in the early '80s. And the Sena's original popularity platform—jobs for Maharashtrians—is still effectively implemented through nearly 200 Sthaniya Lok Adhikar samitis led by former mayor Sudhir Joshi. At the ground level, the samitis, which have ensured jobs for Maharashtrians in sectors like banking and science research, have done more to gain support for the Sena than any emotive BJP campaign.

And it is Bal Thackeray alone who can keep crowds spellbound with his militant rhetoric laced with mordant humour and double entendres—as befitting someone who prefers being known as a political cartoonist rather than a politician. His domination of the Sena is so complete that when there is a serious rift among his lieutenants, as between Manohar Joshi and Chaghan Bhujbhal, just the threat of dismissal is enough to bring them back into line. Even ambitious Sena leaders have had no choice but to accept the emergence of Raj Thackeray as a prominent leader and possible successor.

So solid has Thackeray's clout become and so ubiquitous the terror evoked by the Sainiks, that anyone publicly rapped by the Sena supremo rushes to his Bandra bungalow to make amends. Last fortnight, after Thackeray pulled up Dev Anand at the Shivaji Park rally for casting a Pakistani heroine, it was the ageless auteur's turn to make the rounds of his house. Shortly afterwards, Pakistani-cricketer-turned-Hindi-film actor Mohsin Khan's car was attacked in Bombay. He had to appeal to Thackeray to be able to continue working in the Hindi film industry.

Clearly, even if the BJP leadership is uncomfortable with Thackeray's muscular methods, it has decided to sink or swim with him. At least till the time it can break out on its own. ■

HEMANT PITHWA



Sena activists burning copies of *Mahanagar*. Wagle (inset):

MAHANAGAR

Hitting the Headlines

DURING the Emergency, the editor of Bombay's Marathi eveninger, *Mahanagar*, Nikhil Wagle, took time off from college to participate in JP's movement in Bihar. In responding to the Shiv Sena's attacks on his paper with banner headlines saying, "We'll fight it out!", he showed similar pluck.

But Wagle, 32, has had to pay a high price in tension and trauma for his suddenly high visibility. Soon after his paper vocally criticised Bal Thackeray for his opposition to the aborted Indo-Pakistan cricket series, a bunch of hoodlums invaded the *Mahanagar* office, smashed equipment and injured two sub-editors. A few days later, when the Bombay Union of Journalists took out a protest morcha to Sena Bhavan, four journalists were brutally attacked.

Though Thackeray has denied that Sainiks attacked the protestors, he makes no bones about his distaste for *Mahanagar*. Its copies were publicly burnt and vendors were warned against selling it. It was, said the Sena chief, nothing but an "earthworm" that Sainiks could pour salt upon. Explaining Thackeray's extreme reaction, Wagle contends: "Our readership is mainly in areas that are Sena strongholds. Thackeray does not like being exposed before his own followers." What is more galling for Thackeray is that *Mahanagar* is published from the heart of the Sena bastion, Shivaji Park.

Started by Wagle in January last year, the independent-minded paper has never hesitated in criticising Thackeray in his own barbed style. Says Wagle: "His ideas have to be countered in strong terms." But Thackeray dubs it as villification.

Undaunted, Wagle says that *Mahanagar* has got over the ill-effects of the Sena campaign on its distribution, and has reclaimed most of its circulation, which averages about 80,000. But the last has not yet been heard on the tussle between Wagle's earthworm and Thackeray's Tiger.

—M. RAHMAN

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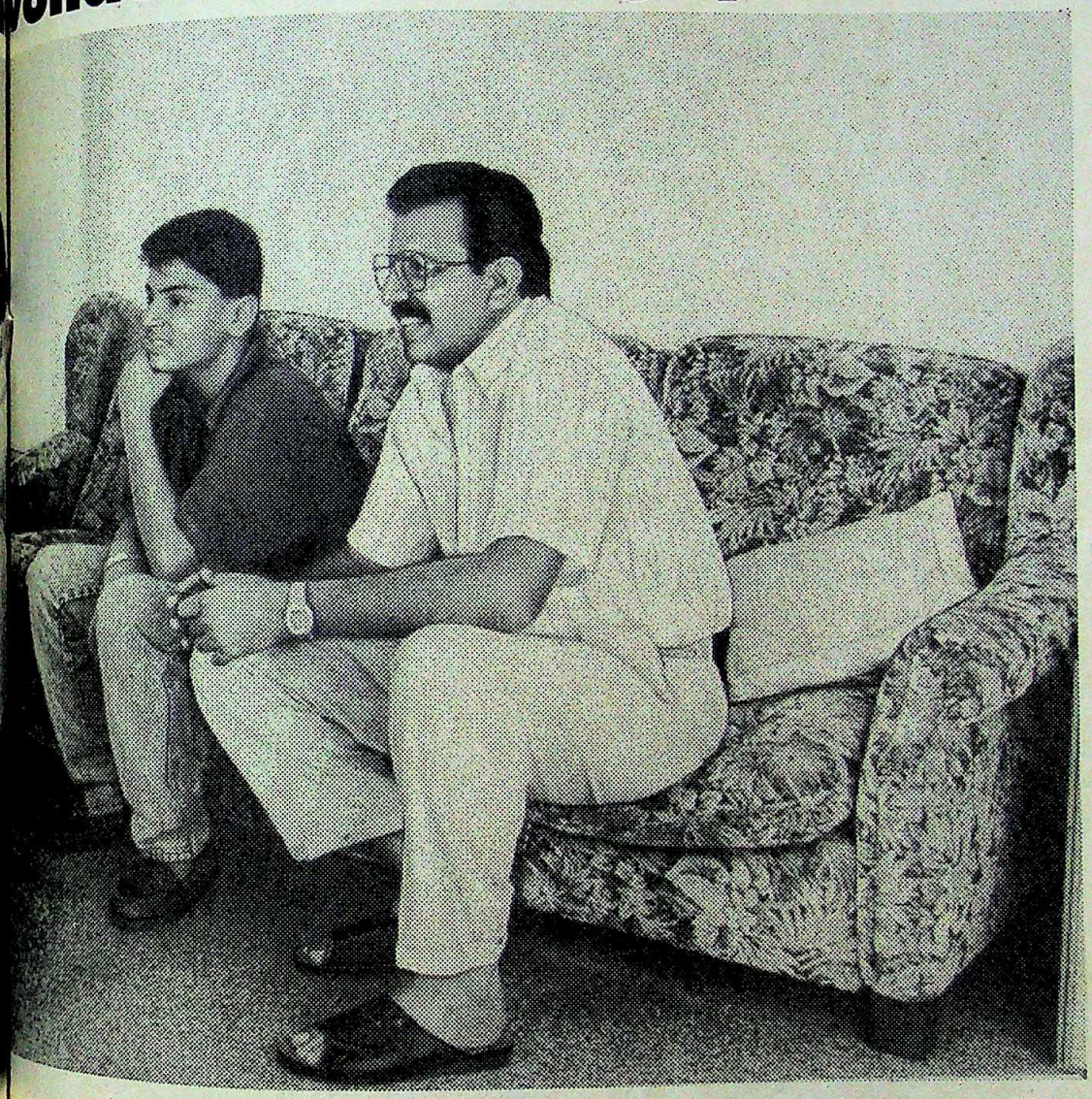

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SHIPRA DAS

Grieving family members of a victim

HOOCH TRAGEDY

Deadly Draught

Over 200 deaths expose racket in ayurvedic drugs

IT was black Diwali in Delhi again. This year, though, the killer was not Mandal but illicit liquor. Over 200 people, most of them casual labourers and rickshaw-pullers, died after consuming Karpoor Asav or *sura*, a so-called ayurvedic medicine. Instead of just high alcohol content and herbs to herbs to cure diarrhoea, dysentry or abdominal pain, each Rs 8 bottle also contained deadly methyl alcohol.

Even those who survived the tragedy have been marked for life. Ranjit Das, a cobbler from Jehangirpuri, has been blinded. Azadpur labourer Ram Meher's vision is now blurred. Says he: "My life has just gone dark." Like him, most of the victims, originally from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, lived in north, west and east Delhi.

And as the corpses piled up and the pyres burned, the Government faced a flood of accusations. The most grievous of these was negligence. Thanks to the absence of regulation in the ayurvedic drug industry, illicit liquor is being passed off as medicine. Not only is it able to evade prohibitory orders on dry days but it is also affordable. Many small-time operators have flourished by making these spurious products.

The Karnal Pharmacy at Muradnagar in Ghaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh, which manufactured the lethal dose, was one such. The police found that along with a licence to manufacture the medicine, it had got an annual government quota of 4,000 litres of potable alcohol. Additional Commissioner P.R.S. Brar's plainitive query has a point: "How can we go around checking every bottle of ayurvedic medicine, especially if it is legally manufactured? We can try to crack down on illicit liquor but what do we do here?"

The same question must be bothering many. Delhi Administration officials agree that the Government's policy of encouraging traditional systems of medicine has, ironically, paved the way for the production and sale of medicines with a high alcohol content. It has been so for several years, but it took the Delhi deaths for the authorities to sit up and take notice. Minister of State for Home M.M. Jacob now says that the Government will have to seriously consider how to quash the racket and enforce controls to ensure that the actual medicines are of high quality. He has put officials on the trail of ayurvedic medicine manufacturing units which are peddling alcohol by circumventing laws.

Small operators exploit the absence of regulation in the ayurvedic drug industry.

Thousands of poor people drink bottles of medicines like Pudin Hara everyday because it has an alcohol content of over 70 per cent. In fact, some years ago, young activists in the hills of Garhwal and Kumaon were so incensed by the addiction of locals to ayurvedic medicines like Ashoka Liquid Extract I.P., Mritasanjeevani Sura and Pudin Hara, that they organised a popular movement against it. They even got violent in the process. Going from one medical store to another, they pulled out the medicine bottles, handed a hammer to the owners and made them destroy each bottle.

But the Government learnt little from that episode. With checks being non-existent, nobody even notices as ayurvedic manufacturers violate the prescribed formulas. As officials from the Voluntary Health Association of India

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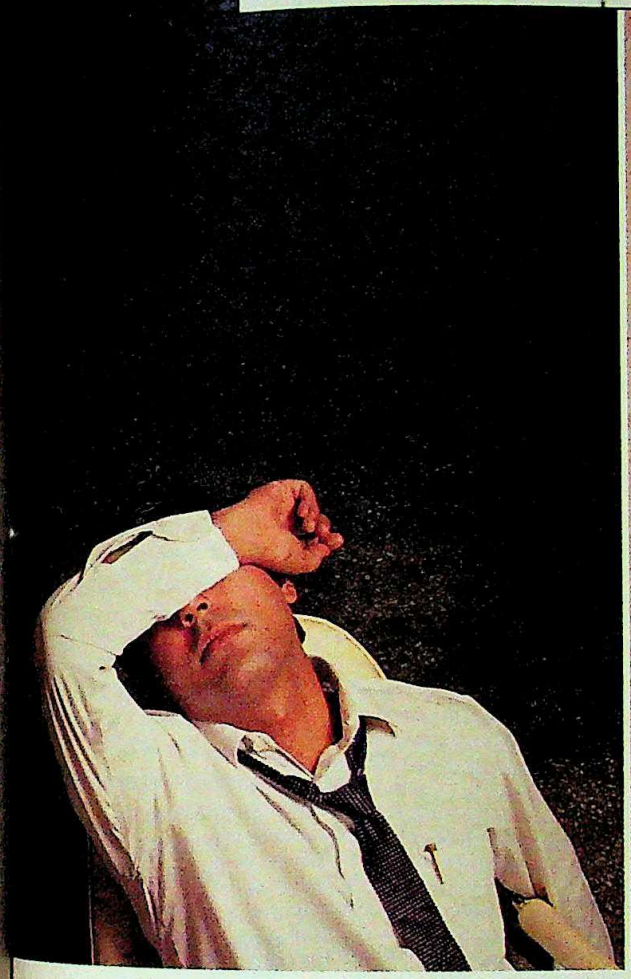

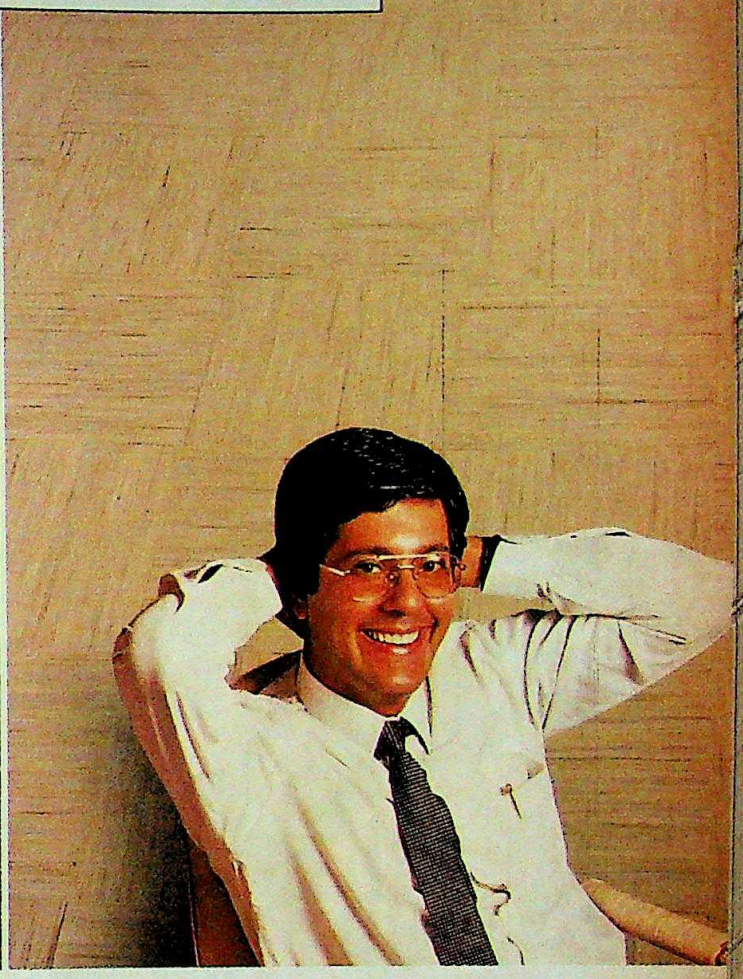

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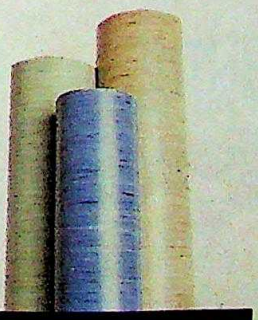

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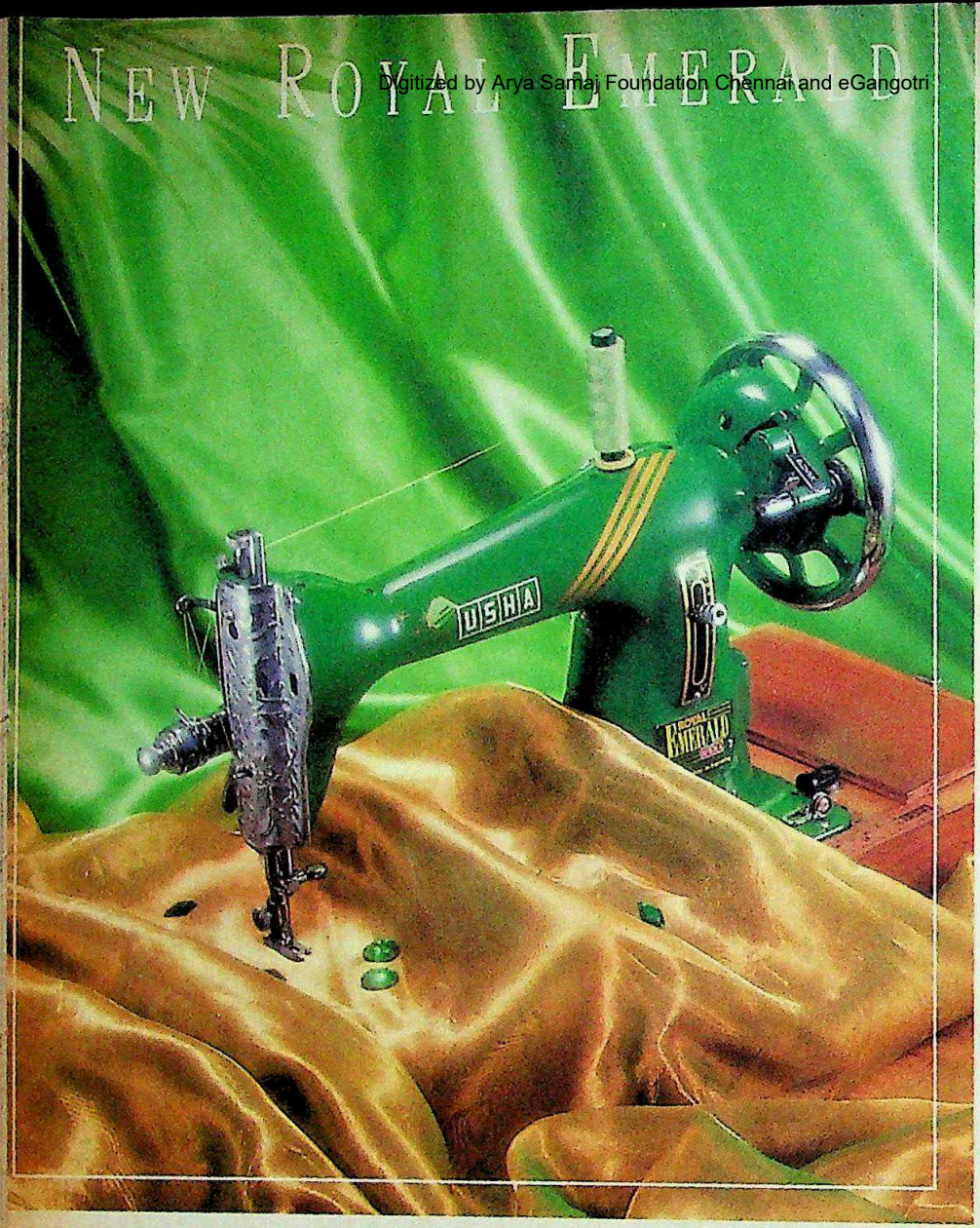

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point out, many of these ayurvedic medicines are, in fact, illicit liquor. The legal label gives manufacturers like Karnal Pharmacy impunity from prosecution. And it escapes everybody's attention when they put in the lethal methyl alcohol, which has no part in the formulation.

Nor is Karnal Pharmacy the only such establishment in north India. The money-spinning market is hardly a secret with well-known companies also involved in it. All the while, the Government has looked the other way. According to ayurvedic doctor P.V. Unnikrishnan, the Government has incontrovertible evidence against such manufacturers. Various types of *sura*, he says, are freely available in the market. The Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha maintains that it is not possible to generate more than 12 per cent alcohol on natural fermentation of herbs. But formulations with as much as 78 per cent alcohol do exist. The Government has only to go by the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, which brands any product containing harmful or toxic substances as an adulterated drug, to clamp down on this racket.

That control of liquor is low on most state government's priority is clear from the way deaths from adulterated alcohol has been occurring in the country with alarming regularity. In the past decade alone, there have been eight such major tragedies. The worst being in Bangalore in June 1981 which killed 336 people.

In most of these incidents, after the initial flurry of arrests, interest dies down and the illicit liquor trade continues to flourish. For instance, despite the Bangalore tragedy, in Karnataka as much as 40 per cent of the liquor consumed is reportedly illicit.

In Delhi too, after the death toll mounted, the city police swung into action and arrested over 60 retailers and seized as many as 60,000 bottles of the deadly brew. And a judicial inquiry has been ordered. But there is cynicism about its outcome.

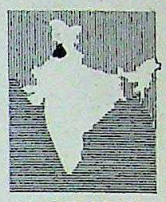
Meanwhile, even days after the tragedy broke out, the killer *sura* kept claiming lives over-straining crematorium facilities. In Kewal Park in North West Delhi last week as many as 14 pyres were lit in one night. An exhausted Om Prakash, a crematorium employee, said he had never seen so many corpses in a single day. But if nothing is done, the country is going to see a lot more deaths caused by poisonous brew.

—RAMESH MENON

PUNJAB

Temple Tussle

Fresh round of power play

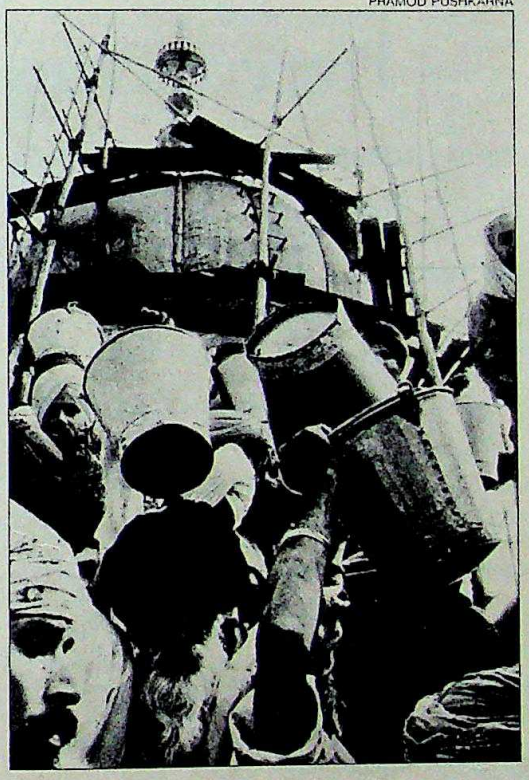


HISTORY has a way of repeating itself in the Golden Temple. Thousands of devotees gathered again in the shrine on October 29 to participate in the Akal Takht kar seva. And unawares to them, yet another chapter on the murky temple politics was being added to the sorry saga of Punjab.

The reconstruction of the Akal Takht evokes a series of painful flashbacks, from which neither the politicians and the Centre, nor the militants have learnt any lessons. It was first damaged during Operation Blue Star in 1984. The kar seva initiated in 1986 had no great pious purpose behind it—and was cut short by Operation Black Thunder. This time too the militant organisations are using the seat of temporal power in their race for supremacy and public acceptability.

Restoring the Akal Takht

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



By laying claim to the kar seva, militant factions are trying to assert their supremacy.

The first off the blocks was the Damdami Taksal, when its chief Baba Thakar Singh asked Sikh masses to converge on the temple to restore to the Akal Takht its sanctity, violated by the Centre. Then promptly, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), which had earlier abandoned the idea for fear of militant defiance, too moved in saying reconstruction was really its domain. The militant Babbar Khalsa also joined the battle threatening bloodshed if the Taksal conducted the kar seva. However, the Panthic Committee (Sohan Singh), responsible for the recent killings of policemen and their families, pleaded for a non-confrontationist approach.

A confrontation was avoided when the beleaguered SGPC conceded to hand over the kar seva to a committee of five sants, including Baba Thakar Singh. "They are our nominees and will work under our direct supervision," said Baldev Singh Sibia, since removed as SGPC President, in a weak bid to reassure people. He also claimed that the Taksal had agreed to adhere to a code of conduct whereby the work would only go on between nine in the morning and five in the evening and no volunteers would be allowed to stay overnight in the complex.

What actually did happen left no one in any doubt that the kar seva was a Taksal show all the way. The other four sants were nowhere to be seen. The code was violated the very first day when supporters of various leaders entered the complex with arms. The overnight stay condition was also not inviolable, claimed Taksal's chief spokesman Mohkham Singh. He minced no words when he said that they were resuming the work entrusted to them by the 1986 Sarbat Khalsa. That year the entire Akal Takht, hurriedly repaired under the then home minister Buta Singh, had been razed to the ground. Then too the militants

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were in command and not the SGPC.

Later, in 1988, in a bid to regain initiative, the Congress(I) government at the Centre released the then Akal Takht chief Jasbir Singh Rode and allowed militants to gather in the complex in the hope that Rode would veer the different militant gangs towards the negotiating table. Instead, they converted the area into a sanctuary. And fortified it to fire at securitymen. Ultimately, the Centre had to send crack NSG commandos to flush out the terrorists.

This time, too, the intelligence agencies are playing with fire by infiltrating the Taksal ranks and promoting it. It is an open secret that the Ferozepur SSP was asked to release Mohkham Singh—wanted in many extortion cases—after he had picked up the prize catch.

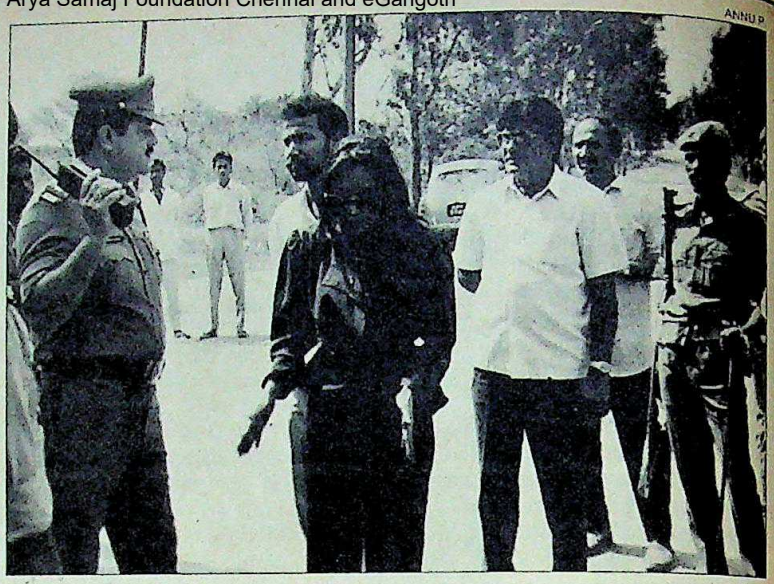
The Taksal, for the time being, has won the game of one-upmanship. It has gained power, prestige and funds by virtue of its role in the kar seva. And that, not reconstruction, was its aim. After the first day when 8,000 devotees heeded its call, few showed up. For, the Akal Takht's structure is already in shape and it needs skilled hands, not voluntary labour. The masons have indeed arrived to fix marble slabs.

The intelligence agencies are backing the Taksal move to let it gain respectability among Sikh masses, which will come handy in the elections expected to be held in the state by February 25. The Taksal had participated in the last aborted elections.

The agencies may, however, find that they have bitten more than they can chew. The rival militant gangs are hardly likely to allow the Taksal to gain political acceptability. The Taksal will not be able to prevent them from entering or using the complex. Besides, the Taksal itself may do a volte face a la Bhindranwale.

However, the militants will find it hard to convert the temple into a hideout this time. After Operation Black Thunder, the Government took the precaution of unhinging the doors of the rooms lining the parikrama. But, as CPI leader and veteran Punjab observer Satpal Dang says, "It is not an impossible task." There is no deadline to complete the reconstruction and the speedometer is in the hands of the militants. The Central agencies could well find their covert move backfiring. And this may not be the last time that the Centre flounders.

—HARINDER BAWEJA
in Amritsar and Chandigarh



ANNU P

Police at Chiraan Palace

ANDHRA PRADESH

Property Pains

State acquires Nizam's land

THE prince's problems never seem to end. Mukarram Jah, the scion of the Hyderabad Nizam's family, is fighting a bitter battle with the Government. The bone of contention: his 300-acre estate on the outskirts of Hyderabad on which is located the modest Chiraan Palace.

Last month the Andhra Pradesh Government, armed with an executive order dated October 25, stormed the estate to take control over it. Officials seemed to be in a tearing hurry so that Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy could lay the foundation-stone for the proposed Deccan National Park on the estate on November 1—the state formation day.

Predictably, perturbed palace staff made every effort to stall the Government's plans. For one, they moved the Andhra Pradesh High Court to quash the take-over attempt. Then, Jah's principal adviser, Sadruddin Jhaveri, faxed a message to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao appealing for an independent inquiry into the "blatant act of terrorism". That wasn't all. His wife, Shahraza Jhaveri, even accused Reddy of being the "biggest land grabber in the state".

The recent conflict is only the latest in a series of confrontations between Jah and the Government. Jah made his first appeal in 1981 asking the Government to exempt the land from the Urban Land Ceiling Act (ULCA) on grounds of "undue hardship" and "public interest" permissible under the law. However, the appeal was turned down in 1983.

Jah then made his second appeal in March this year. This was after a noting dated September 12, 1984 from then chief minister N. Bhaskara Rao agreeing to the exemption. The ostensible reason: Jah's plan to sell the land to an NRI builder Khan Latif Khan for a colony of NRIs. This was in the public interest as their investment would promote the state economy. On March 27, the court ordered that the status quo be maintained.

Despite the court order, the Government went ahead with its plans. Officials claim that Chiraan isn't in the blue book of protected properties. Moreover, they say Jah doesn't face "undue hardship". In fact, his properties—2 million sqm of land, to be precise—are way in excess of the ULCA limits.

The truth is Jah is trying to sell the land to clear his income tax, wealth tax and estate duty arrears, which are estimated at more than Rs 20 crore. At today's price of about Rs 40 lakh per acre, Jah is sitting on property worth over Rs 100 crore. However, he is unable to sell it until he gets that crucial exemption.

The two sides are now getting ready to slug it out in court from November 24. Until then the royal row continues.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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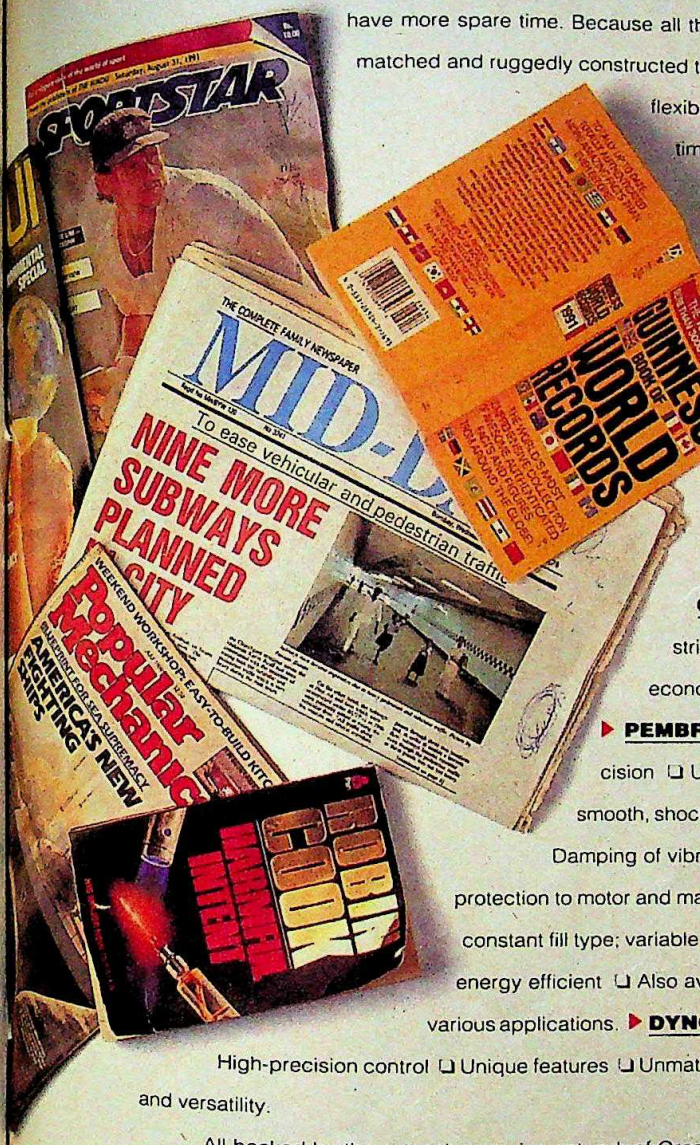

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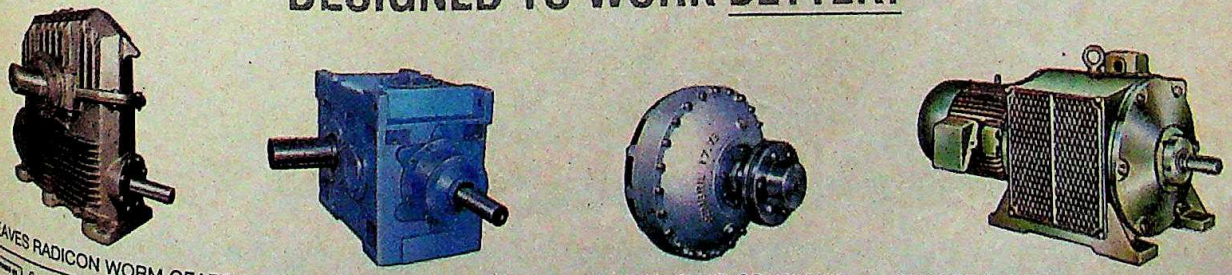

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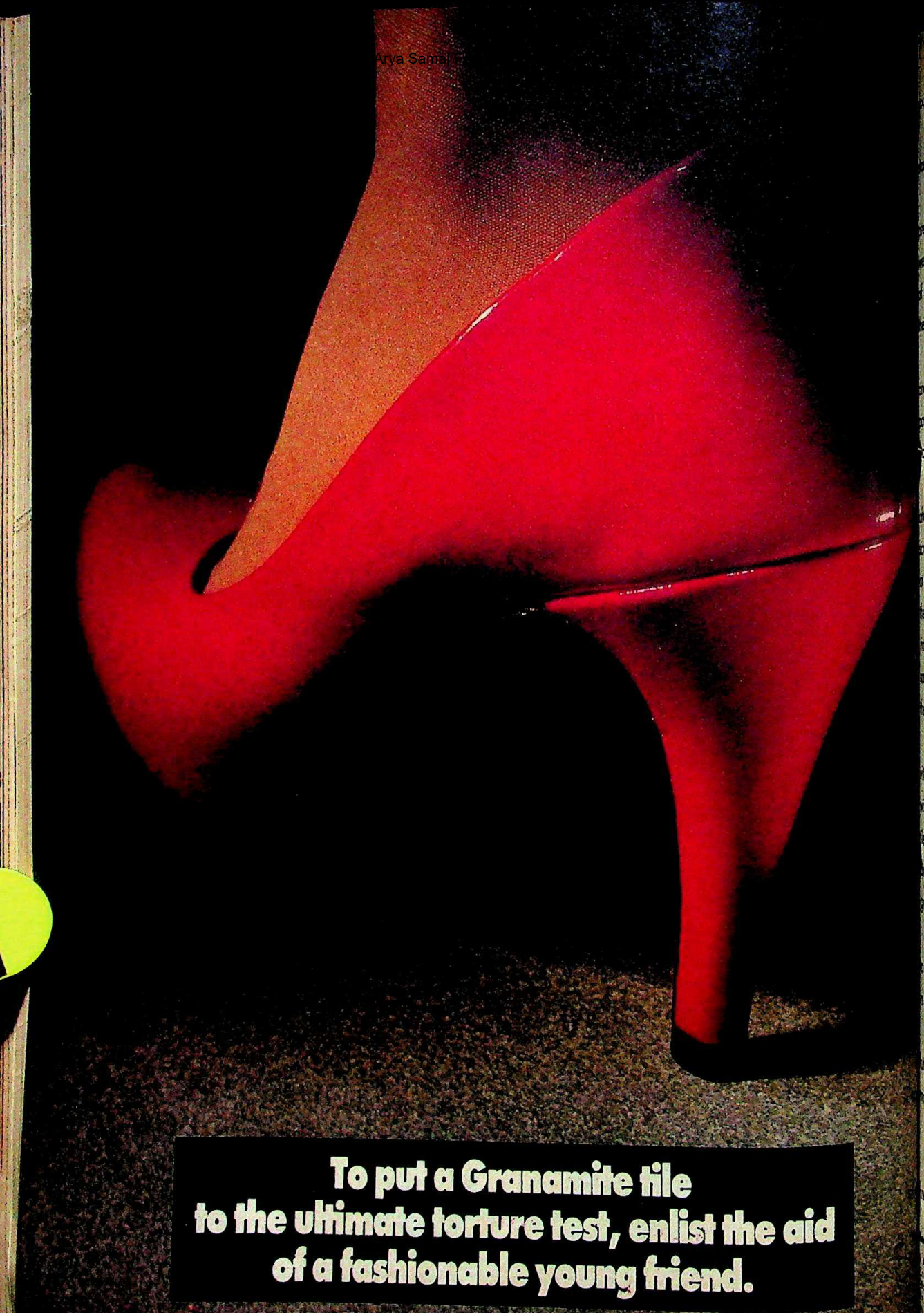

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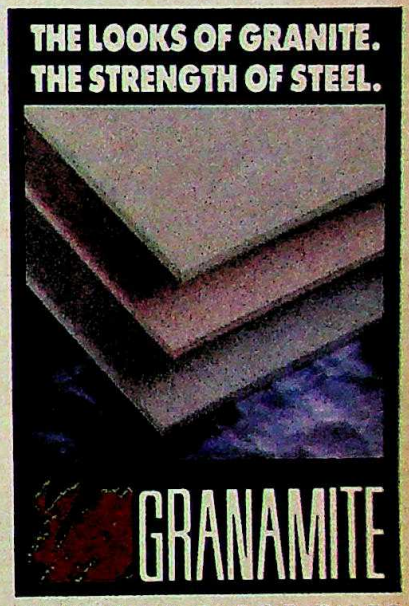

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...bad: Pluti Marketing. Ph: 76195, 411883. ▸ **Bangalore:** P.C. Sampath and Co., Ph: 223392, 235904. P.C. Mallappa and Co., Ph: 561881, 577789. Moosa and Co. Floors, Ph: 222496, 226354. ▸ **Baroda:** Ambalal and ...Ph: 65747, 67073. ▸ **Belgaum:** Demat Enterprises, Ph: 24442, 23335. ▸ **Bombay:** A.B.C. and Co., (Saptagiri), Ph: 2626666, 2626677. Venubhai Chandulal Co., Ph: 320335, 336337. C. Bhagilal and Co., Ph: 2860690, ...8. ▸ **Calcutta:** Mirvin Multinationals Inc., Ph: 220416, 227964. ▸ **Calicut:** Parthas Enterprises, Ph: 75654, 73608. ▸ **Cochin:** A 2 Z Tiles and Floorings, Ph: 366930, 353705. ▸ **Coimbatore:** Electro Diesel Pvt. Ltd., ...6569, 44099. ▸ **Hyderabad:** Premier Agencies, Ph: 202037, Uday Engineering Co., Ph: 233378. ▸ **Madras:** Padma Enterprises, Ph: 458238. Vaigai Sanitation Pvt. Ltd., Ph: 74820, 76494. V. Govindaraja Mudaliar Sons Firm, ...Ph: 55266, 51099. ▸ **New Delhi:** National Building Products, Ph: 6434227. D.P. Gupta and Co. Pvt. Ltd., Ph: 7541748, 7548699. Colletion Ghandhi ..., Ph: 6416085, 6411870. ▸ **Panaji:** V.C.R. Marketing Co., ...2613. ▸ **Pune:** Patel Traders, Ph: 653939, 650228. ▸ **Secunderabad:** Materials Marketing Co., Ph: 77122, 821511. ▸ **Surat:** Interceramic, Ph: 30079, 85383.

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V. RAMASWAMI

Still Ruling

But the doubts mount

MISHRA

The judgement has not directed the chief justice on allocation of work to Ramaswami.

RAMASWAMI

THE myth has been shattered. Supreme Court judges are not above suspicion, after all. And it was the apex court itself that debunked the myth. Last month, in a historic pronouncement, a constitution bench expressed the hope that Justice V. Ramaswami—against whom impeachment proceedings are pending—would abstain from sitting the bench and conducting functions in the interest of judicial propriety. That is, at least till he was cleared of various allegations of financial misconduct.

However, the judgement was ambiguous. It did not categorically direct the judge or the chief justice on allocation of judicial work to Justice Ramaswami. But it noted that the judge be guided by the chief justice in such a situation. As a result, Justice Ramaswami continues to deliver judgement. Even as charges of widespread financial irregularities—including overinvoicing furnishing expenditures during his tenure as chief justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court—still hang over his head.

Shorn of the lengthy legalese, the gist of the verdict was that:

- the impeachment proceedings initiated against Ramaswami by former Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray did not lapse with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
- Justice Ramaswami can legally continue his judicial functions.
- there is no time-bound direction for the inquiry committee.

The trouble really began when the new Government at the Centre declared that the impeachment motion initiated against Ramaswami in the ninth Lok Sabha had lapsed with the change in government. However, according to Article 124(4) of the Constitution: "A judge of the Supreme Court shall not be removed...except by an order of the President...supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting...on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity." The recent judgement in the Ramaswami case clearly lays down that Parliament is eventually bound by the court's interpretation of the law.

Not everyone agrees though. Said Kapil Sibal, one of the petitioners who sought the quashing of the impeachment proceedings: "Parliament is, in fact, supreme. And I think that the matter should definitely be discussed in Parliament again." On the other hand, noted constitutional lawyer F.S. Nariman believes that "the question of impeachment proceedings lapsing with the dissolution of Parliament just does not arise".

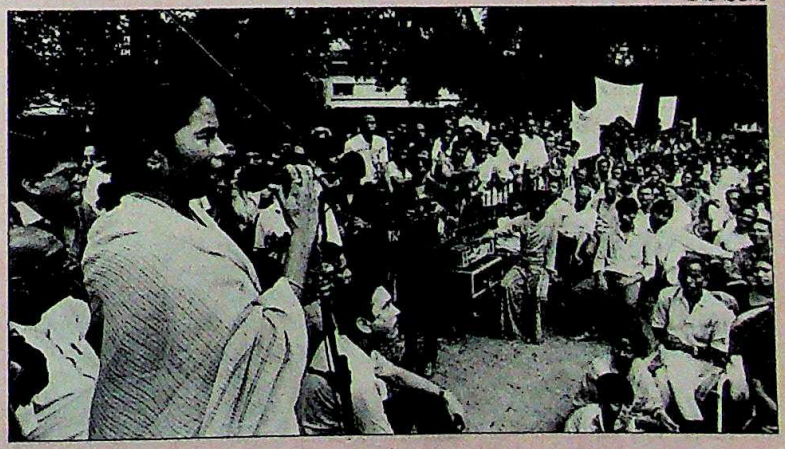
Even as legal luminaries continue to debate the matter, Ramaswami's fate seems to hang in the balance.

—ANIRUDHYA MITRA

CALCUTTA

No Parking

SAIBAL DAS



Banerjee protesting in Calcutta

THE situation calls for a sense of humour. But it is doubtful whether West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu is tickled by the controversy over the proposed amusement park in Calcutta.

The state Government's plan to lease—to a private firm—32 acres of one of the few green patches in the city has irked many. Not the least because the company is owned by the Todis, reportedly close to the chief minister. They will enjoy the lease for 33 years, for just Rs 11 crore.

The media and opposition parties are bristling at what they think is a sell-out. The market value of the plot, which is part of the Rabindra Sarovar complex, is estimated to be Rs 100 crore. What is worse, the plan for the park apparently does not conform to the scheme drawn up by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority. And while children might benefit, their elders will be deprived of their pet sporting haunt. Which could be why Union Minister of State for Sports Mamata Banerjee proclaimed last fortnight: "The plan has not amused us. We will resist it."

Basu is unperturbed. The hue and cry, he says, is motivated. Certainly, he does not think the spectre of Disneyland will rise from the ashes of Devi Lal's fiefdom to haunt his government.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

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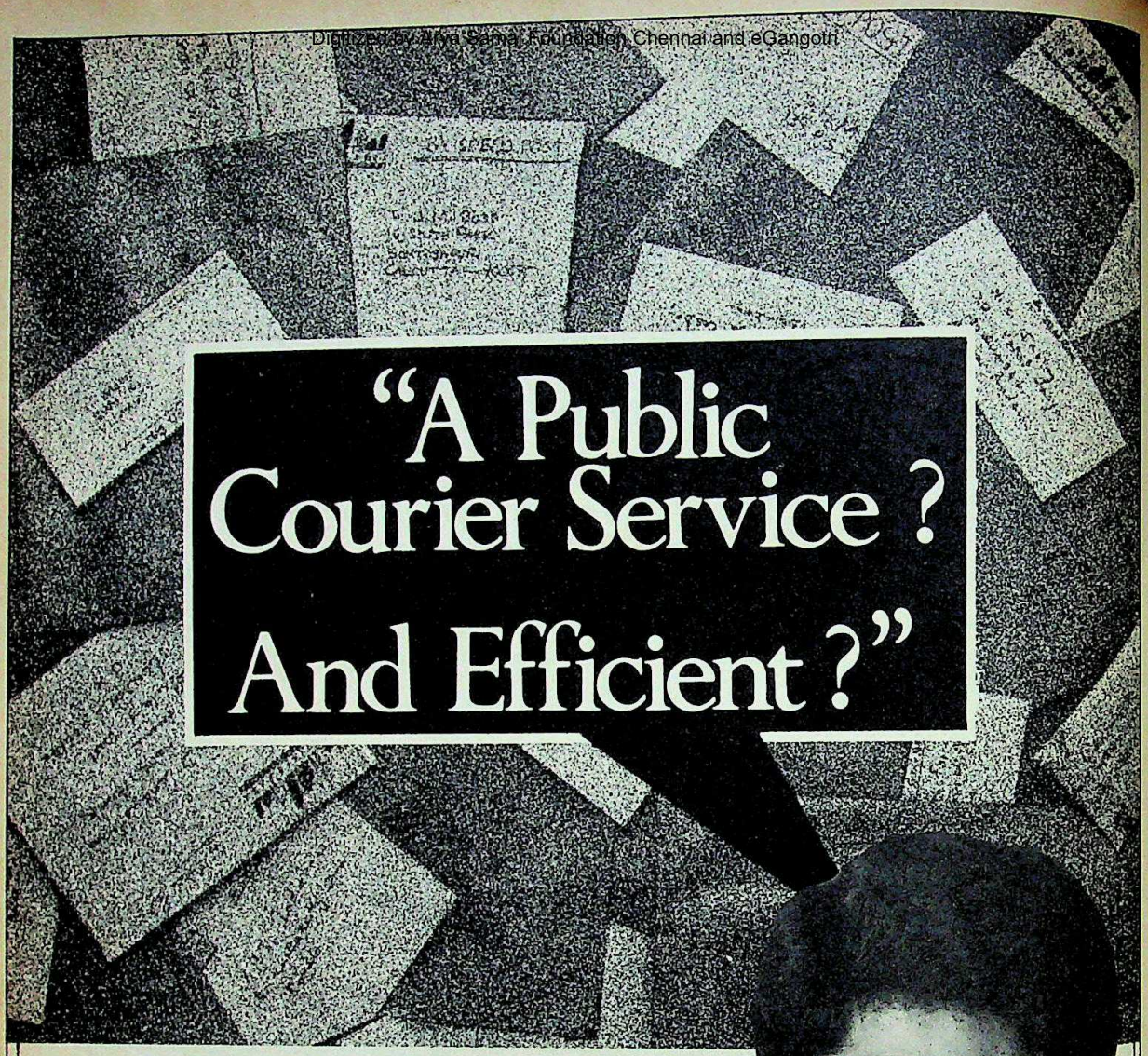

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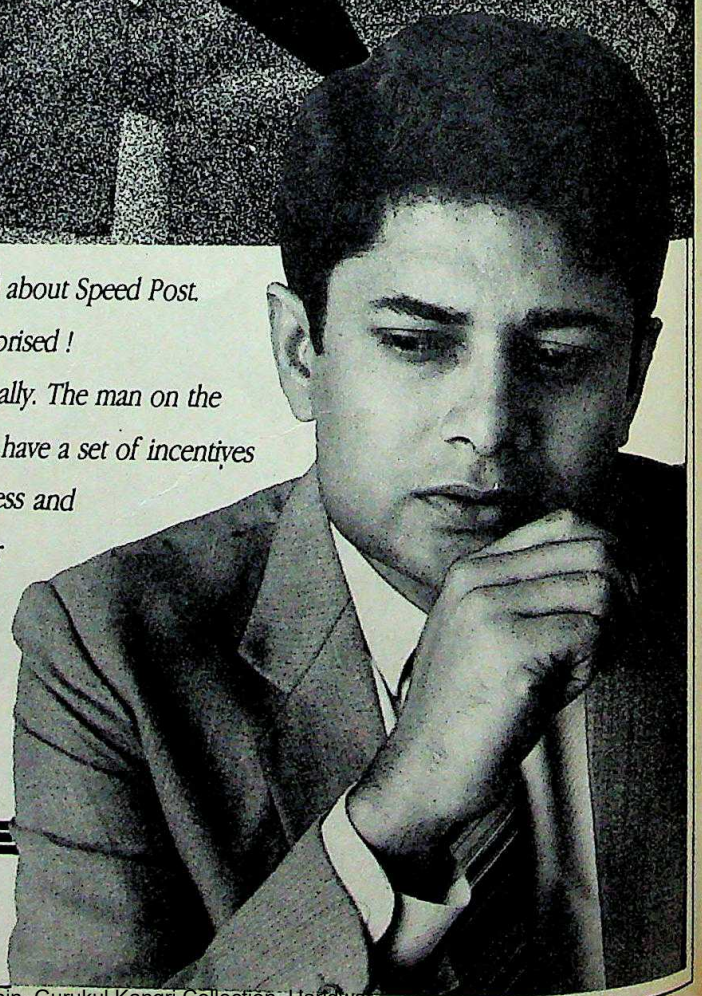

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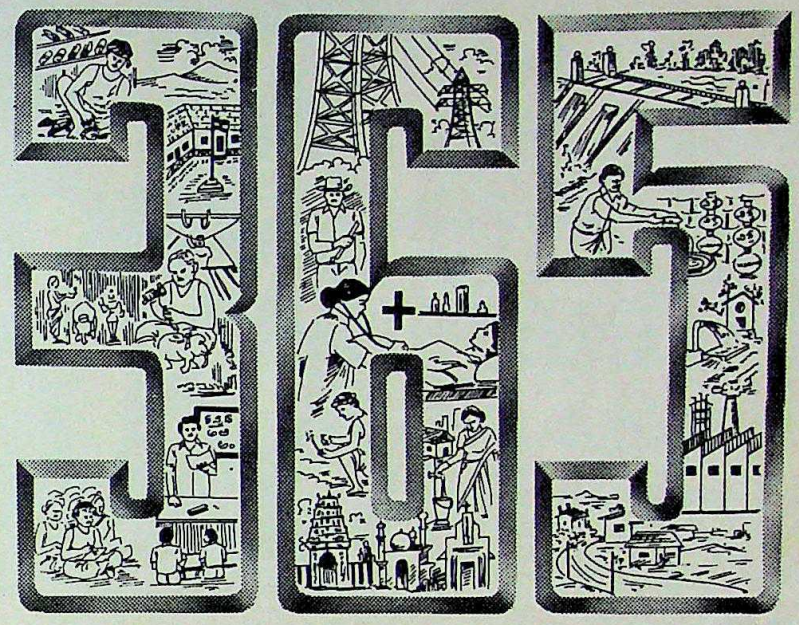

365 DAYS

On this day, I thank all the people of Karnataka for their whole-hearted co-operation and sincere support which has enabled the Government to make rapid strides on the path of progress and development in this last one year.

Sri S. Bangarappa
Chief Minister of Karnataka

No effort is too much, no task too difficult for a government committed to the cause of progress of the State and prosperity of its people. Today, the Government under the leadership of Sri S. Bangarappa looks back with pride. 365 days of dedicated service to its people. Today is also an occasion for introspection and further hopes and aspirations. The past one year has witnessed the initiation and completion of many a programme aimed at improving the living conditions of the poorer, weaker and the backward sections of the society. This has been.....

A FILLIP TO PRIMARY EDUCATION:

The government has recruited 7000 school teachers to ensure adequate teaching staff in primary schools. Free text-books and uniforms were provided for needy students. Establishment of an Open University and University for Kannada tries to fulfill the promise of a literate state.

A TREASURE TROVE FOR THE RYOTS:

Energisation of 70,000 pumpsets in one year: reduction in their power-tariff: abolition of the Fragmentation of Holdings Act: remunerative prices of agricultural products: setting up agricultural and horticulture colleges at Mandya and Mudigere respectively and computerisation of land records are a part of the sweeping reforms that have contributed to the betterment of agriculture and agriculturists.

A BOOST FOR IRRIGATION

The government allocated Rs. 190 crores for major and medium irrigation projects and have speeded up completion of ongoing project works in the Krishna and Cauvery Basin providing 1 lakh acres with perennial irrigation.

MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER AND COMMUNAL HARMONY:

The government took stringent measures in bringing down the incidence of crime and communal disturbances. Riot-hit areas were provided with emergency aid. A State Integration Council was formulated with the sole purpose of bringing down escalating crime-rate and communal flare-ups.

INNOVATIVE AND USEFUL SCHEMES FOR THE POOR

SHUSHRUSHA –

A primary health-care scheme for rural people which provides free medical examin--ations every six months.

ARADHANA –

This scheme reinforces religious senti--ments and fulfills a social need among weaker sections by constructing and renovating places of worship in neglec--ted and backward areas.

VISHWA –

A scheme to boost rural industrialisat-ion utilising indigenous crafts and skills of rural people. Through this scheme the government has extended full support to the cause of the rural artisans.

ASHRAYA –

A massive housing programme to provide shelter for the homeless, this scheme will provide 1 lakh houses in five years for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

AKSHAYA –

A humanistic programme which provides an incentive to the children of the under privileged to attend school.

Within a span of just 365 days, the contributions we have humbly made in the service of Kannada Nadu is but a small beginning towards achieving the goal of peace and prosperity, and equality in opportunity for every citizen of the State. Today, we reaffirm our commitment that together we shall strive to build a better Karnataka.

karnataka information

Renaissance/535/B

MORE IN THE YEARS TO COME

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GUJARAT

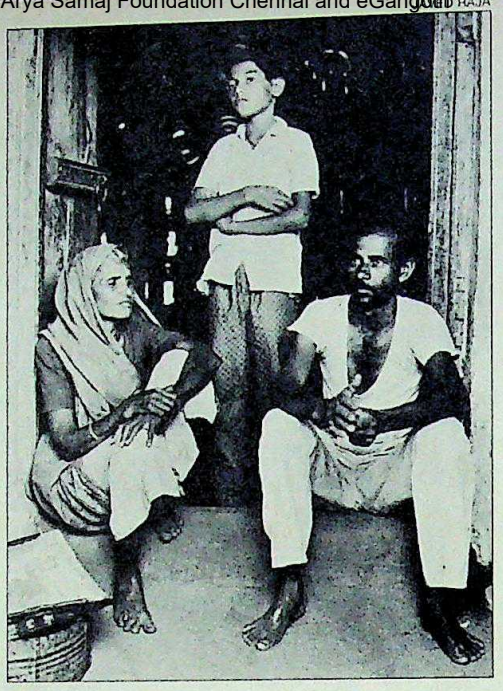
Hitting Back

Mother sued for desertion

THE scars of his traumatic childhood show on his face. But, unlike the scores of sufferers of parental estrangement, 13-year-old Siraj is made of sterner stuff. Last fortnight, he created history by taking his mother, Zubeda, 35, to court for desertion. In an application filed under Section 125 of the CrPC, Siraj has sought Rs 300 as monthly maintenance from Zubeda.

Siraj's mother, who belongs to a fairly well-off family, broke with his father, Ibrahim, 37, a poor matriculate shepherd in Vav village in north Gujarat, evidently because she could not live within his means. Soon after Siraj's birth, Zubeda left her husband and infant to live with her brothers. Eight years ago, after giving birth to her second child, Zubeda left for good.

Last year, she filed a suit against Ibrahim, claiming Rs 800 as monthly maintenance. Charging him with wife abuse, Zubeda says: "I couldn't take his beatings. Once, he even tried to strangle me." Four months ago, her claim was partly upheld and the court directed Ibrahim to pay her Rs 300. But Ibrahim, who says he makes barely Rs 300 a month and has three dependants, was unable to do so and was sentenced to jail for two months.



JOBY RAJA

Siraj with father Ibrahim and grandmother

Last fortnight, with the help of lawyers provided at the court's behest, Siraj filed a counter-application against Zubeda claiming Rs 300 maintenance. The application maintains: "Zubeda earns Rs 1,000 a month from her cosmetic shop while Ibrahim does not earn enough. So, it is Zubeda's duty to maintain Siraj." Although Zubeda denies this, the application states she recently obtained a business loan from a rural bank, a fact confirmed by the locals.

With the court application coming up for hearing soon, father and son are preparing for battle. A favourable judgement may answer Siraj's prayers. But for greater vindication, he pleads with "the Almighty, not to give anybody a mother like mine".

—UDAY MAHURKAR

KARNATAKA

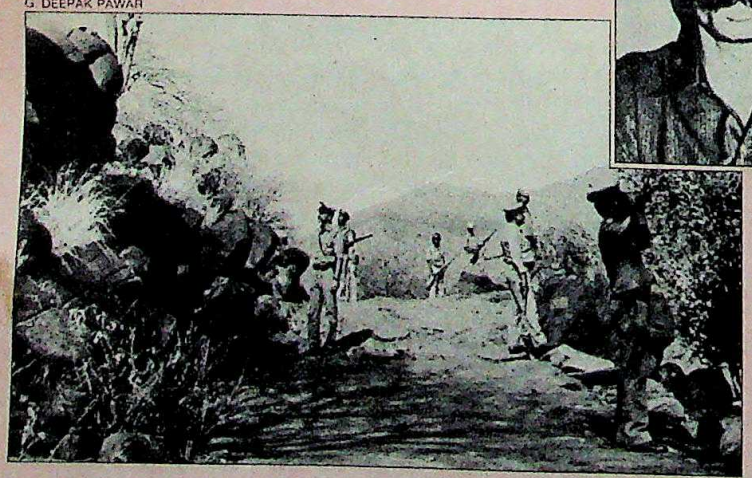
Fatal Pursuit

EFFORTS to bring to book the notorious sandalwood smuggler and ivory poacher Veerappan received a severe set-back last week. The reason: the man in charge of the operation to nail him was found murdered. The beheaded body of P. Srinivas, 47, a divisional forest officer who led the task force set up by the Karnataka Government, was found at Indiganatha, near Veerappan's native village, Gopinatham.

The police claim that Veerappan tricked Srinivas into believing that he would lay down his arms. So when the man who had doggedly been on Veerappan's trail and had been camping in Gopinatham village for over a year, went to the gang's hide-out, he was unarmed. And open to attack.

Police search underway (below); and Veerappan

G. DEEPAK PAWAR



The locals will miss him. By organising medical camps for them, he had built up a vast network of informants to track veerapan. Says Deputy Conservator of Forests B.K. Singh: "Srinivas built roads in Gopinatham, constructed a temple and played volleyball with the villagers."

As the news of Srinivas' killing reached forest and police officials, they made a scramble for the Kollegal forest in panic. But the Government stood firm. Said state Home Minister Dharam Singh: "The incident has only increased our determination to catch him."

Considering they've little headway so far, this seems to be more brave talk.

—SARITHA RAI

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Sir Winston,

22nd October, 1897.

Lt. Winston Churchill, thank you for your despatch from Fort Lockhart, dated October 14th, which we've printed for your news-hungry readers. Being a war correspondent for the Pioneer has always been risky business; and fate linked you again to war in 1939. By then, of course, you had become a leader. Then a Prime Minister and then a Nobel Prize winner. The years swept in the changes. Your newspaper too has changed. It's grown bigger to accommodate the news of the world. Plus colour supplements, entertainment, sports, business and commerce. And a whole section of News Analysis. Quite a menu for the discerning, intelligent reader.

All put together by some of the finest talent in Indian journalism–a team led by the redoubtable Vinod Mehta himself. Of course, the biggest change, Sir Winston, is that The Pioneer is now moving to Delhi–the centerpiece of all the action.

And, at this moment of celebration, we remember you with immense pride. The intrepid young man on the battlefield, armed only with a pen.

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PHILIPS

Average life-span of man : 65 years.
Cost of prevention of head injuries: Rs 600.

Average life-span of your VCR : 10 years.
Cost of prevention of head injuries : Rs 65.

Head injuries: A nightmare
Head injuries, whether they happen to you, your VCR or VCP, can be nightmarish. Especially because of the expenses involved.

Prevention: Unbelievably inexpensive
Preventing them is a simple matter, though. And unbelievably inexpensive, after you have spent Rs 14,000 (or perhaps more) on buying your VCR. A can of Philips Video Head Cleaner, which costs Rs 65, helps you protect your VCR or VCP from head injuries.

Deposits and their removal
The popular belief that alcohol and other alcohol based liquids can effectively clean video heads is entirely misplaced. In fact, their constant use can actually cause harm to the head of your VCR or VCP.

Philips Video Head Cleaner is a fast-acting, non-reactive fluid that speedily and effectively removes accumulated oxides, dust and other contaminants that inevitably get deposited from magnetic tapes.

Go for the best
Undoubtedly the best in the Indian market. Philips Video Head Cleaner is the only one with an international formula. It evaporates faster than other cleaners and doesn't leave any residue that could possibly harm other components, making it the safest bet for your VCR or VCP.

Read, shoot...and save
The Philips Video Head Cleaner comes along with a leaflet of instructions so simple that a child can follow them. Just read and spray-shoot to save the head.

Make it a habit
Using a Philips Video Head Cleaner just once every week can help your VCR or VCP perform better and actually increase its life-span by steering it clear of head injuries.

PHILIPS
AUDIO-VIDEO HEAD CLEANER
ACCESSORIES

BECAUSE PREVENTION IS CHEAPER THAN CURE.

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CLARION/B/P/441/244

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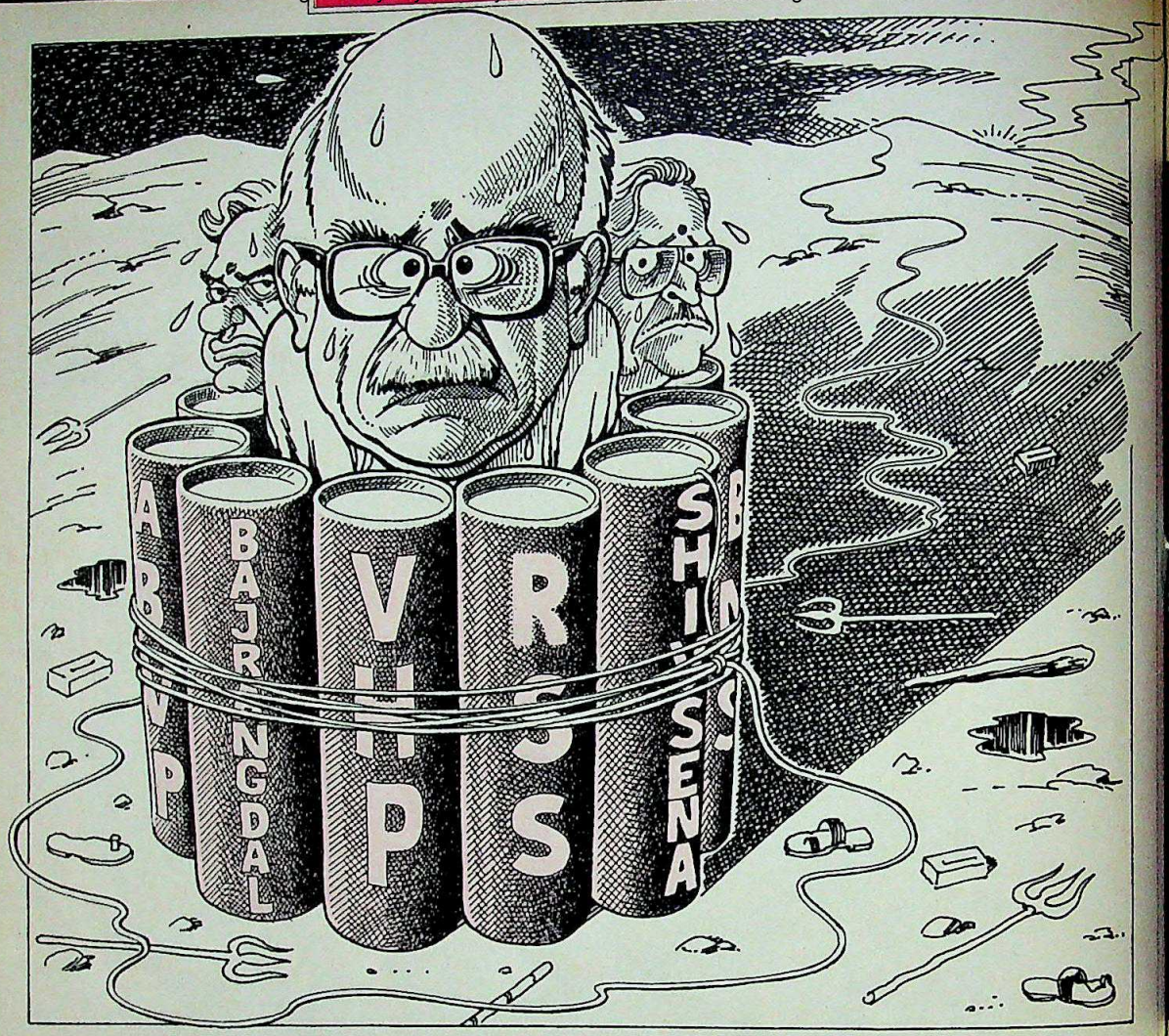

SIGN POSTS

APPOINTED: K.P.S. Gill, as director-general of Punjab police for the second time. Currently serving as director-general of the Central Reserve Police Force, Gill is considered a tough officer, experienced in dealing with militants. His appointment is expected to boost the low morale of the police force in the beleaguered state.

DIED: Rikhi Jaipal, 75, former permanent representative to the UN. He served on the Security Council in 1977-78, and was chairman of the Security Council committee on southern Rhodesia. The UN secretary-general said "he will be remembered with respect".

ELECTED: Dr Ashok Kumar, 35, to the British House of Commons after winning a by-election, the first Asian to do so in this manner. Elected by a nearly all-white constituency, he did not approach voters on a minority basis. The scientist with British Steel takes his place on the Labour benches.

APPOINTED: J.N. Dixit, 56, as the new foreign secretary, succeeding Muchkund Dubey. Presently he is serving as India's high commissioner in Pakistan. He has also held the position of ambassador to Afghanistan and has been high commissioner in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka earlier in his career.

AWARDED: the Jnanpith for 1990, to the well-known Kannada writer, Vinayak Krishna Gokak. Honoured for his outstanding contribution to Indian literature, his works spanning over six decades include poetry, fiction and travelogues, such as *Dyaya Prithvi* and *Bhagvata Nimishagalu*.

KIDNAPPED: Basir Arif, director All India Radio in Leh. A new militant organisation, 'Lashkar-e-Aza', has claimed responsibility in Srinagar. Official reports say Arif had gone to visit his brother in Ganderbal and has been missing since then. Attempts to ascertain his whereabouts continue.

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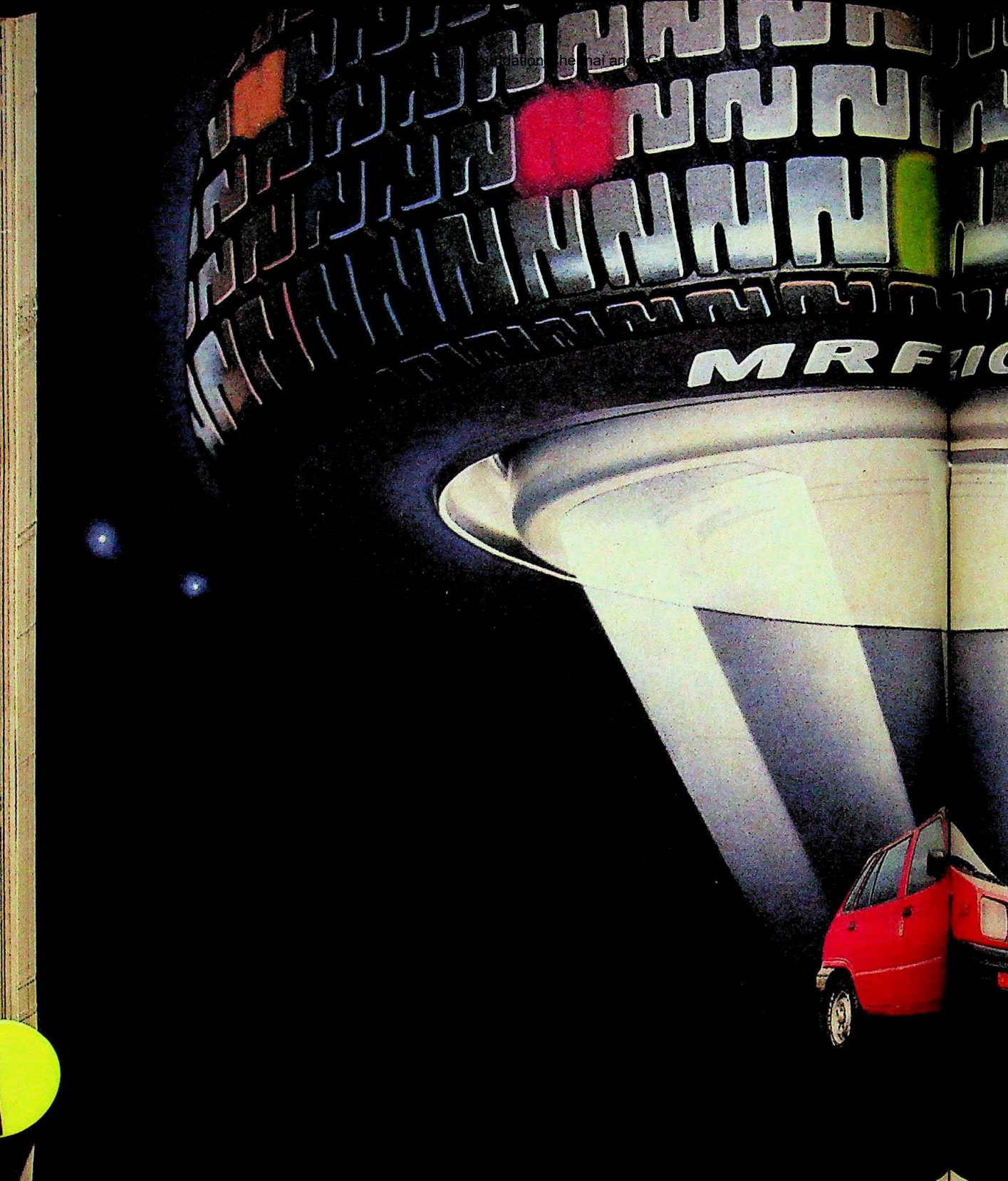

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THE KARAOKE

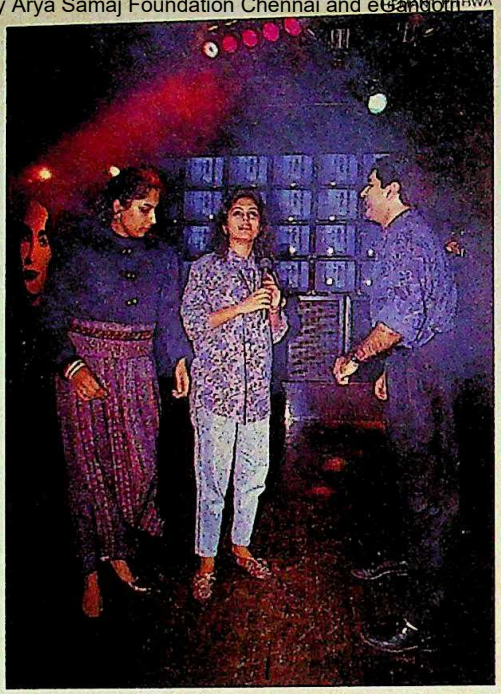
Sound of Success

A new fad sweeps Bombay

IF you can't sing like Madonna, you can at least lip-sync with her. The ultimate fantasy of every bathroom warbler has hit Bombay with the force of a gale. Up there on a screen, the wealthy with a taste for the wacky can have their brief moment of glory.

A magnificent Japanese creation, the phenomenon is going the way of the rising yen. Whether it is Chunky Pandey's birthday bash or Subhash Ghai's premier party, karaoke steals the glitter from even the most slinky starlet. Diamond merchants, stockbrokers and industrialists are all willing to fork out fistfuls for singing along with their pet pop star.

HEMANT PITHWA



Singing with the stars: elite entertainment

Every amateur artiste cannot afford karaoke—which means empty orchestra in Japanese. The video facility can be hired for up to Rs 25,000 for an evening. And the entire system—complete with laser disc player, colour monitors and microphone—costs anything up to Rs 7 lakh. Says Andre Timmins, director of Wizcraft which rents the entire system at least three times a month: "With karaoke, we are talking elite."

But even the rich require more than money to shed their inhibitions. Ravi Ghai of RG fame says people need a drink or two to belt out billboard hits. Some, such as businessman Prakash Thadani, believe in home-bred fun. He owns about 350 songs on laser discs—each of his parties is a resounding success.

The karaoke concept is simple. A laser player and discs project images on a screen, while the music, sans the words, is amplified. When the wannabe sings, her voice merges with the music. Companies like Philips and Videocon have begun to market audio systems, with add-on karaoke, for about Rs 7,000. There may be a market for at least 20,000 systems a month. If software for Hindi film songs is made available, small towns may soon be bopping to the new rhythm. And with Wizcraft planning to open offices in Delhi and Hyderabad, karaoke may soon be more than just exotic entertainment.

—ARUN KATIYAR

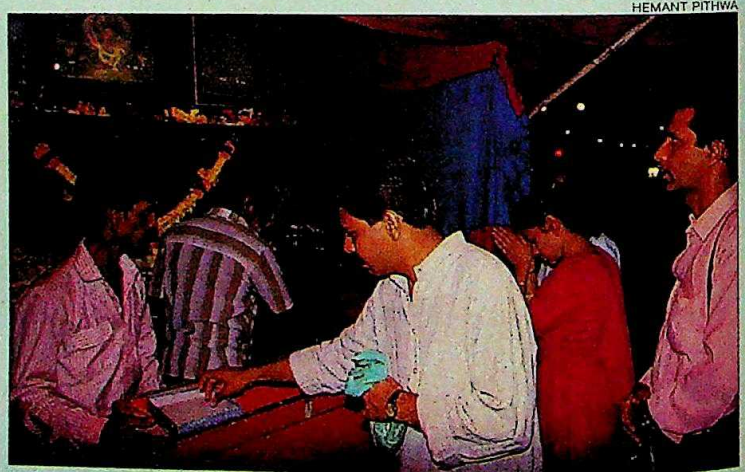
SHREE SIDDHIVINAYAK TEMPLE

Pilgrim's Progress

SNAKING queues of devotees eager for a glimpse of their favourite deities are a thing of the past. The gods are now being served up on closed circuit television (CCTV). And teledarshan is the new name of the spiritual game at Bombay's Shree Siddhivinayak Ganpati Temple.

Teledarshan began when Keltron installed a television camera over the two-and-a-half-foot black stone deity. The cameras in turn are hooked to two colour monitors. The plan was mooted by the temple trust which intended to close the 300-year-old temple for renovation. When devotees protested, the trustees came up with the CCTV idea.

HEMANT PITHWA



Devotees throng the monitor

The CCTV experiment, now eight months old, has met with tremendous success. Last July, on Angarekhi Chaturthi, temple authorities had to hire five additional colour monitors to cope with the rush. CCTV has reduced the wait of four to six hours to an hour.

Teledarshan is more than a blessing in disguise; it's a modern convenience. Says Bhalachandra Phatak, 55, the temple's chief priest: "It may not be the same thing as touching the idol and in any case we don't allow devotees to touch the idol. So teledarshan is good enough." Moreover, the number of pilgrims has gone up fivefold. And donations have also multiplied.

Televangelism evidently is the new order of the day.

—ARUN KATIYAR

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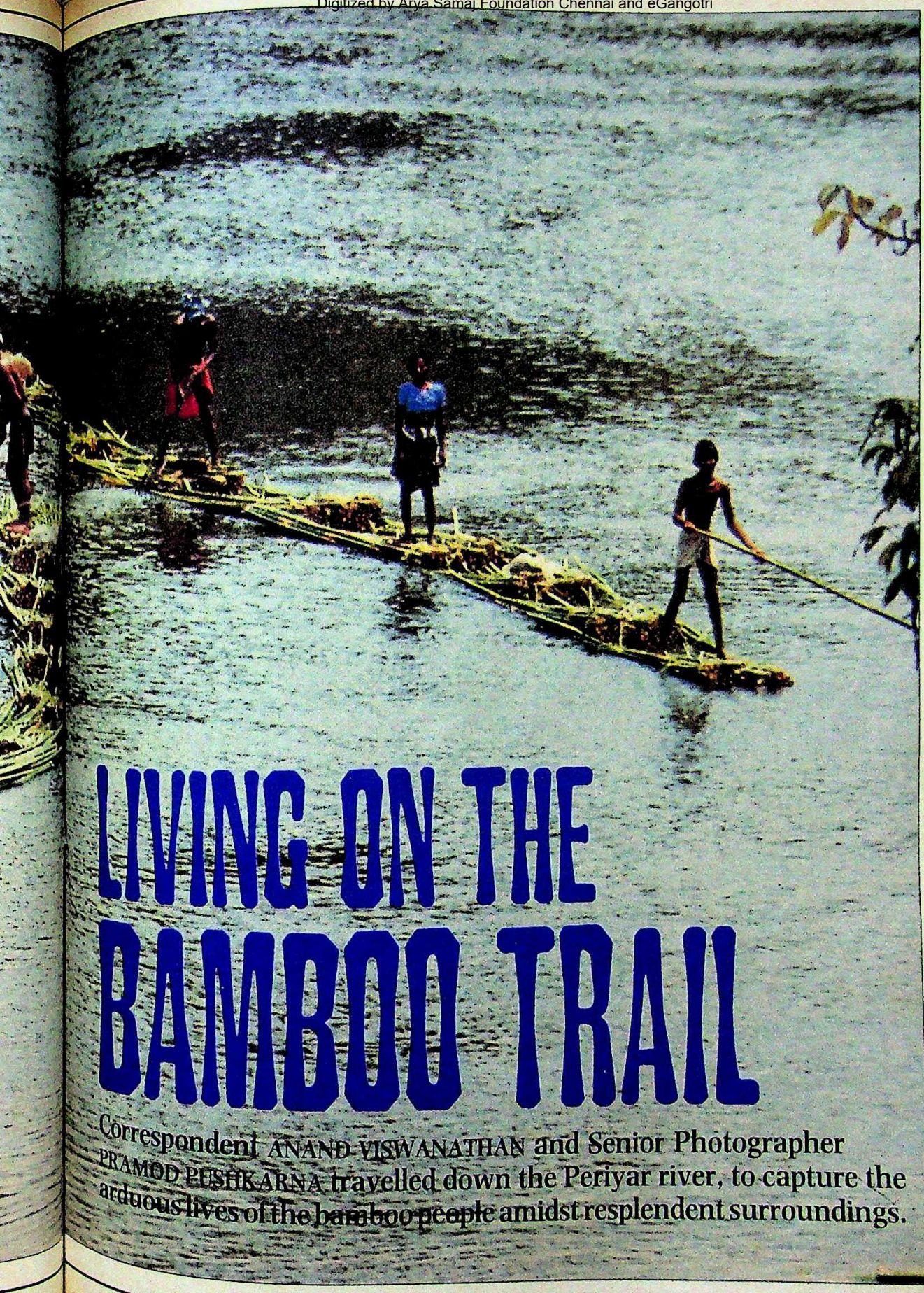

LIVING ON THE BAMBOO TRAIL

Correspondent ANAND VISWANATHAN and Senior Photographer PRAMOD PUSHKARNA travelled down the Periyar river, to capture the arduous lives of the bamboo people amidst resplendent surroundings.

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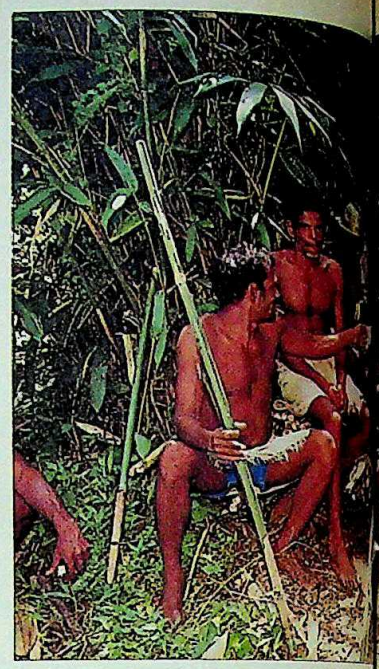
EVERY morning at 6, Sukhara, 28, and her 25-year-old sister Ameena set out from Kuttampuzha, alongside the banks of the Periyar river in the eastern Kerala district of Idukki. Every day, they trudge for five hours over 12 km of tricky terrain to arrive at Naragathodu near Malakapara, on the Tamil Nadu border. And make Rs 25 for a bundle of 30 reeds. On their return, despite heavy bundles on their shoulders, the way downhill is faster. But treacherous too. One mis-step could see all their hard work undone. Yet as other women join them, the sound of their bangles and laughter fills the air. And gossip whiles away the hours homewards.

Another working day in the lives of the *eeta* (bamboo reed) people is over. And as night falls, another time-worn routine takes over. Cooking, washing, and taking care of the children. Says Sukhara: "This is our destiny. How can we complain?"

Their lives are as dark as the forest they frequent. And as oblivious to the changes of the wider world outside. As the tall clusters of rosewood and teak tower over them; the sun struggles to penetrate the thick cover. And the overnight rain hangs heavy in the air, leaving the forest damp and leeches aplenty. Then there is the danger of being



In the isolation of the dense jungle, camaraderie

As the cutters struggle with the elements, wild animals are a constant threat.

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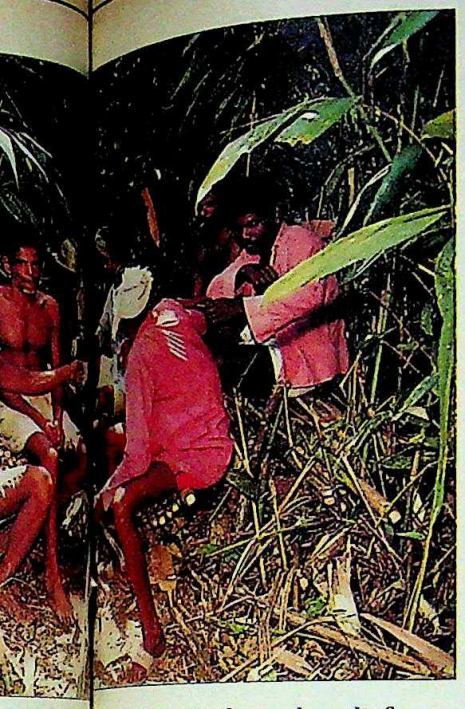

ense jungle

camaraderie is the only relief.

trampled underfoot by wild elephants or stepping on snakes. Says Kunju, 40, a reed cutter for 25 years now: "Every day I go into the forest, I'm not sure I will ever come back."

IF most reed cutters want more money, the desire is understandable. They usually have to live away from their families to earn their livelihood over a weekly cycle. For instance, the Idamalayar hydroelectric project reservoir in central Kerala is ringed by some of the finest bamboo reed forests. Several tonnes of reed can still be salvaged from there despite the submergence of large parts of the forest in 1970. The farthest motorable point here is the Idamalayar project power station. Beyond this, one has to rely on Estappan's boat. The 52-year-old Estappan ferries reed cutters and their produce across the reservoir, 25 km away to Kappayam, one of the 89 collection centres in the state.

As the boats cut across the green expanse of the water, long, winding paths stand out in stark brown against the thick undergrowth, leading into the dense vastness of the jungle. Small huts dotting the reservoir's fringe come into view. It is in these slender structures that the reed cutters live, 30 km apart from

Whether at home or in the forest, the woman's work is never-ending.

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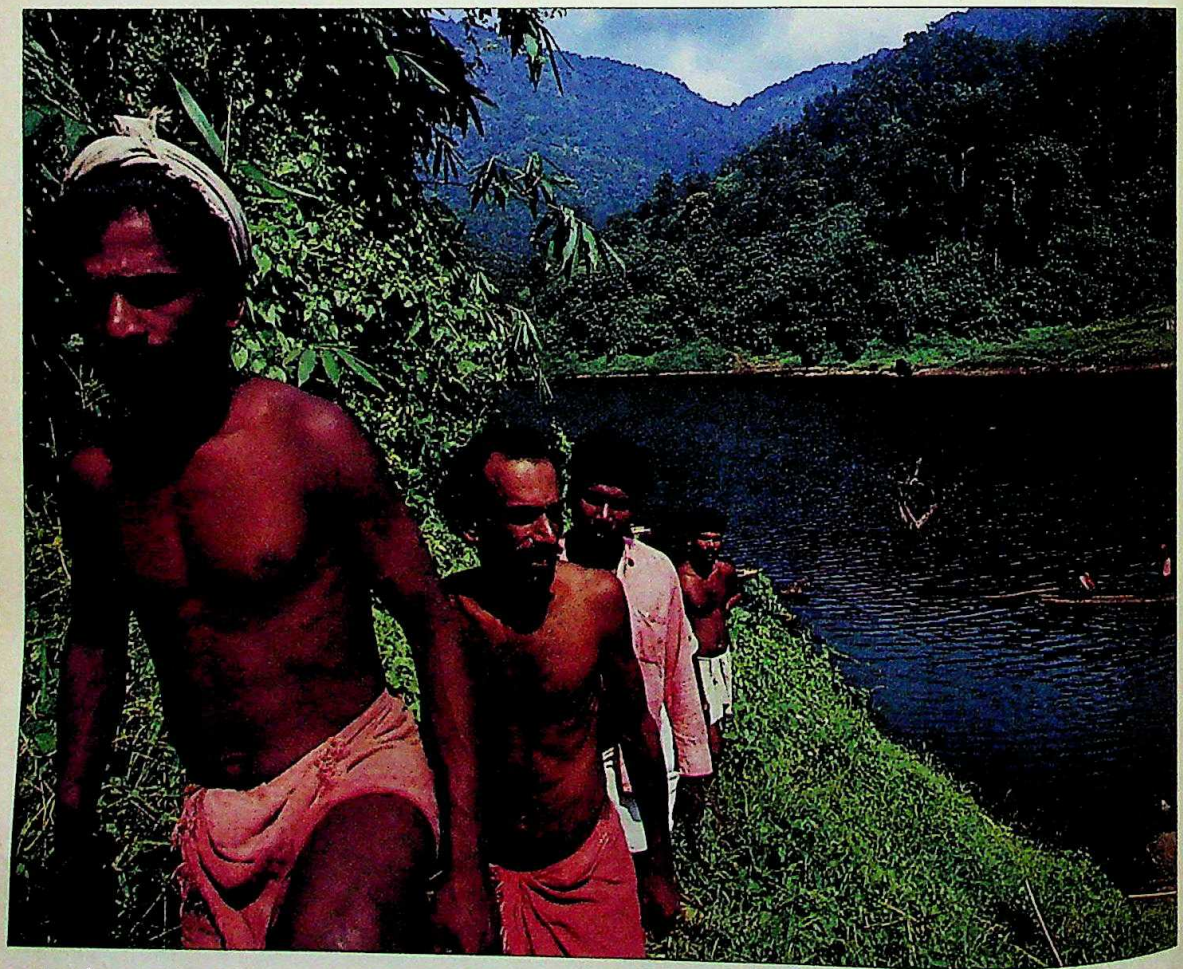
An hour's work fetches Rs 25 but the haul home is back-breaking

their families in Vadayattupara. As soon as day breaks, they fan out in groups from here. Then begins the harvesting. As the cutters tap stout shoots, they keep their ears cocked for a hollow sound. Says Peter, 36: "It is like music to our ears." But there is little music in their daily lives. Most of them are sucked by leeches several times a day. But remedies are ready. Tobacco juice or a lit match stick is always at hand. As is a frugal lunch of boiled *kappa* (tapioca) wrapped in reed leaves. The jungle provides the fresh water.

Sometimes, the cutters are fortunate enough to live with



At the crack of dawn, the cutters fan out in groups of five or six to begin their uphill trek.

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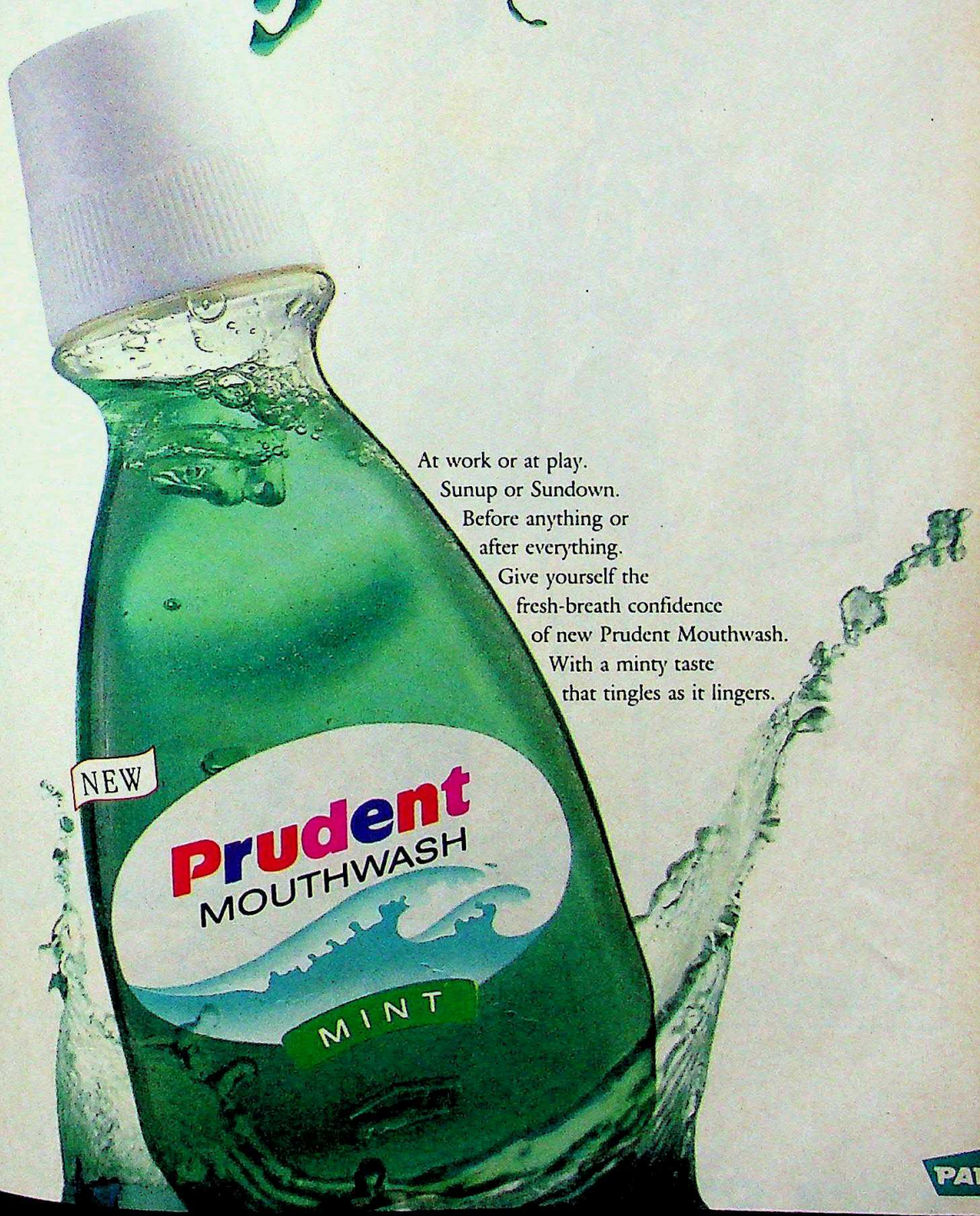
Liquid Confidence!



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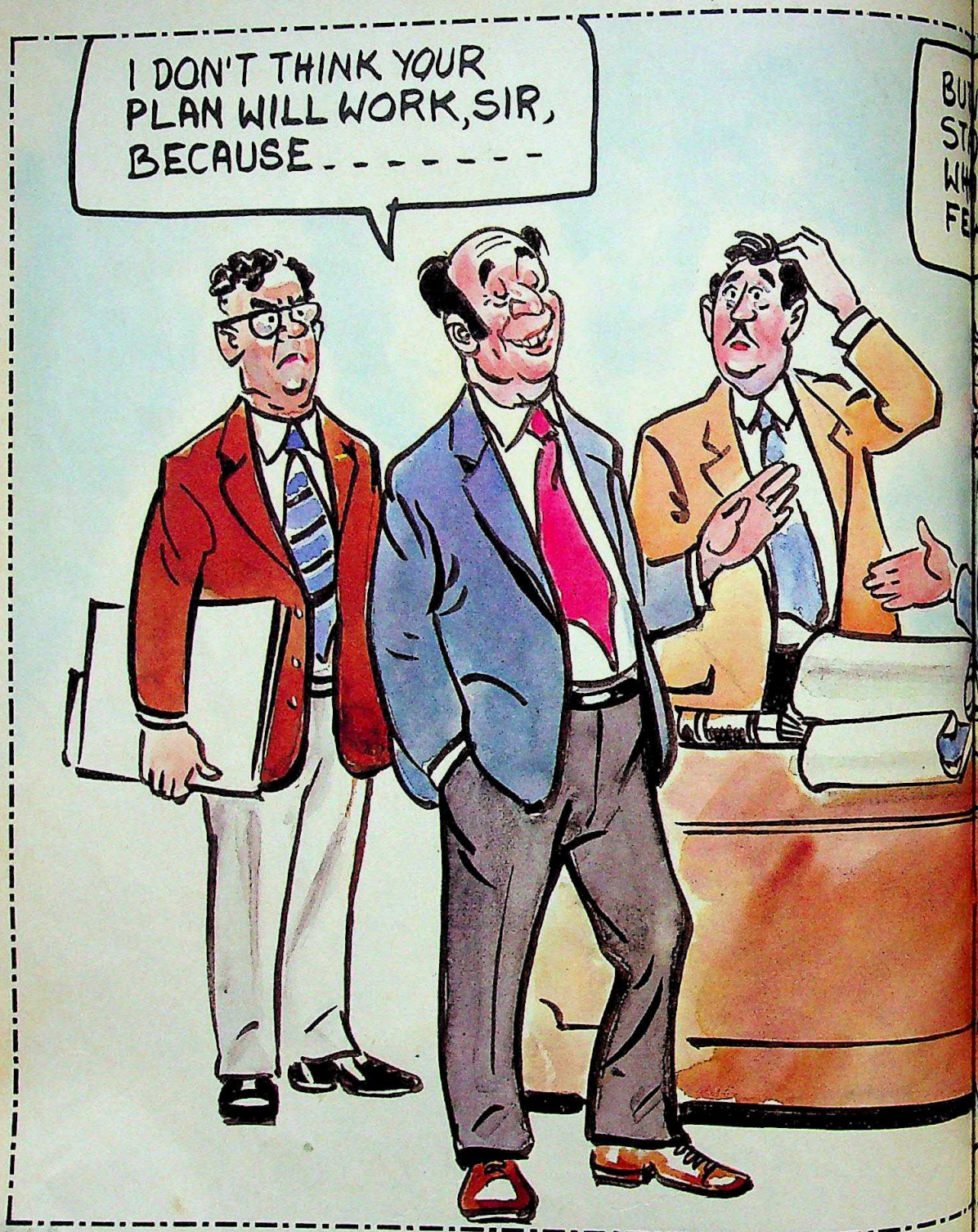

TATA STEEL

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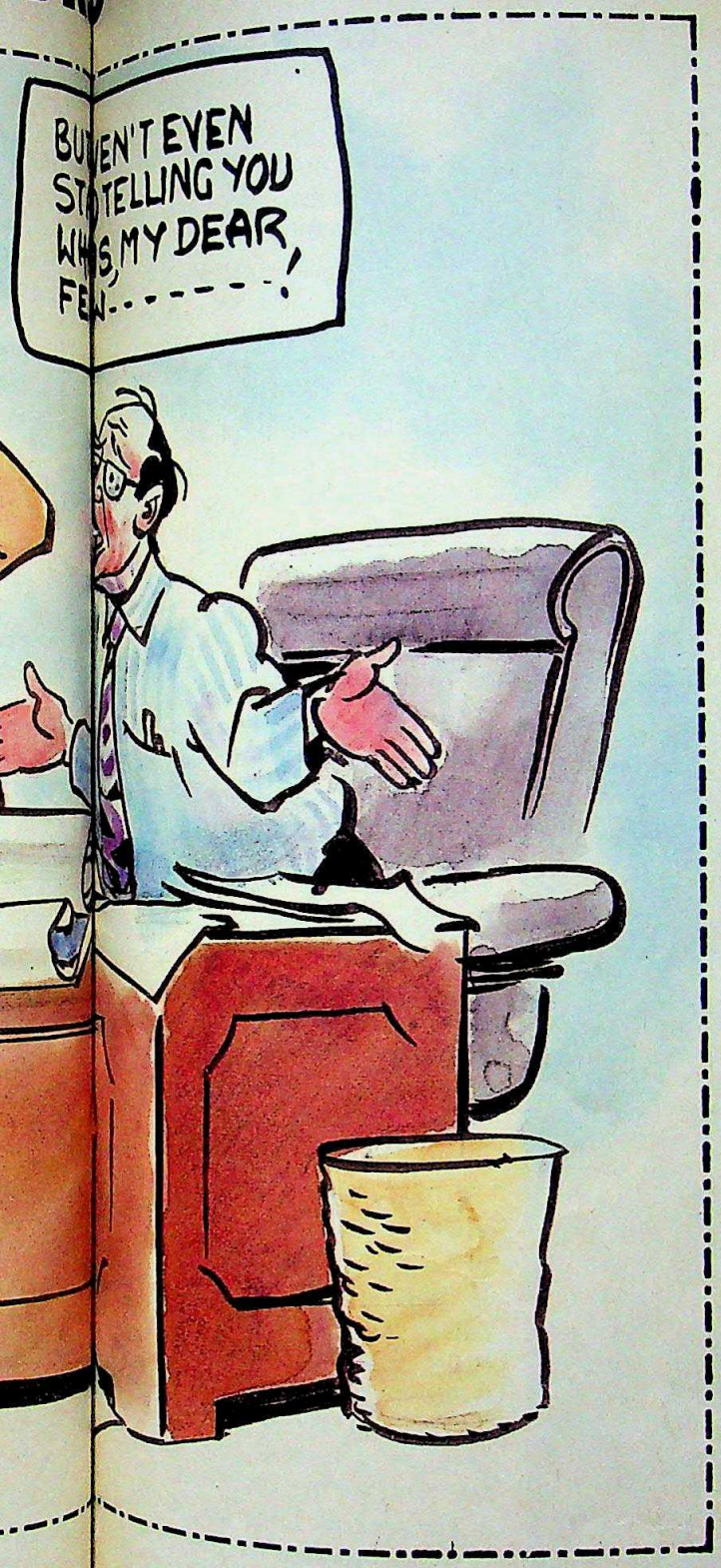

"NO" is a big word. Very often it has been the first step in the world's greatest discoveries. But not everybody knows how to use it with good effect. You know about the habitual dissenter. The chap who is certain to react to any idea, any suggestion with words like: NO . BUT IT WON'T WORK. I DON'T THINK SO. He thinks he is being constructive, but he is only being a wet blanket.

Dissent is useful when it is used responsibly. With imagination. With a sense of purpose, a vision. Dissent against mediocrity. Dissent against the commonplace. Dissent against the status quo. This is the kind of dissent we ought to encourage. In factories, offices, government ... in our daily life.

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DISSENT:
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Fearing wild tuskers, the cutters live in tree houses.

their families. As in Thalipara, a small settlement near Kappayam, which is less vulnerable to the perils of the wild than other extraction points around the Idamalayar reservoir. Joy, 34, and his wife Omana, 28, are one such couple who migrated from Trivandrum last year. Every morning, they go into the forest. By afternoon, they tie the reeds and row them ashore, while their children pass the hours with play, light years away from their parents' anxieties. "Life is tough. But at least we have some work to do," shrugs Omana.

THE produce has to reach the collection centre along the Periyar river once a week. When they get time off from battling the waters, couples like Ravi, 37, and Thangamma, 26, can relax. Theirs is the only hut in Thalipara which has a radio. For these lost people, the static over the airwaves is their one tenuous link with civilisation. Says Ravi: "We have fun when everyone crowds around the radio. But then my wife and I listen to film songs till late."

In Adimaly, Naragathodu and Koorkuzhi too, the cutters live with their families. But in treetop *erumadams* (machans), each accommodating up to three families. Supported by bamboo, roofed with dried *eeta* leaves and floors made from bamboo slivers, the machans are truly of a piece with the environment. They are also a welcome shelter from attacks by elephants. Usually the cutters give them a wide berth by paring down their own working hours, beginning and ending early. The same caution

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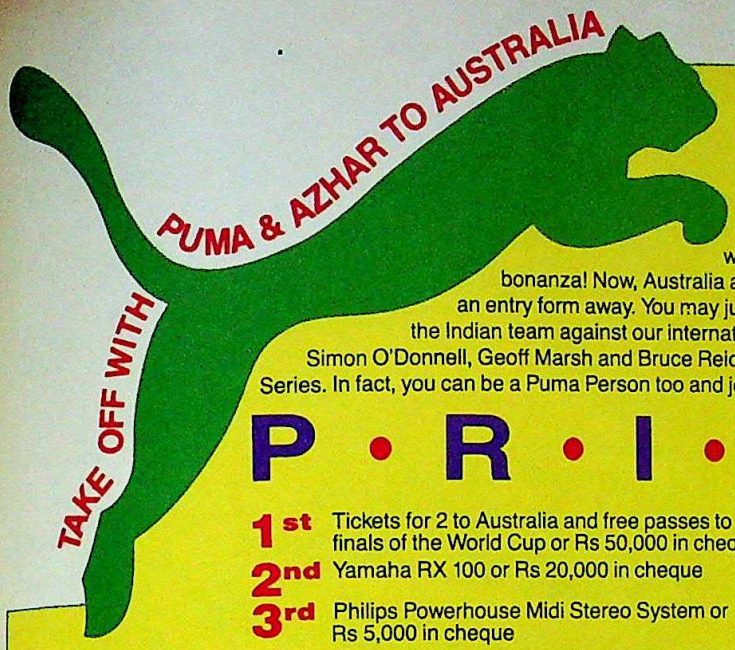

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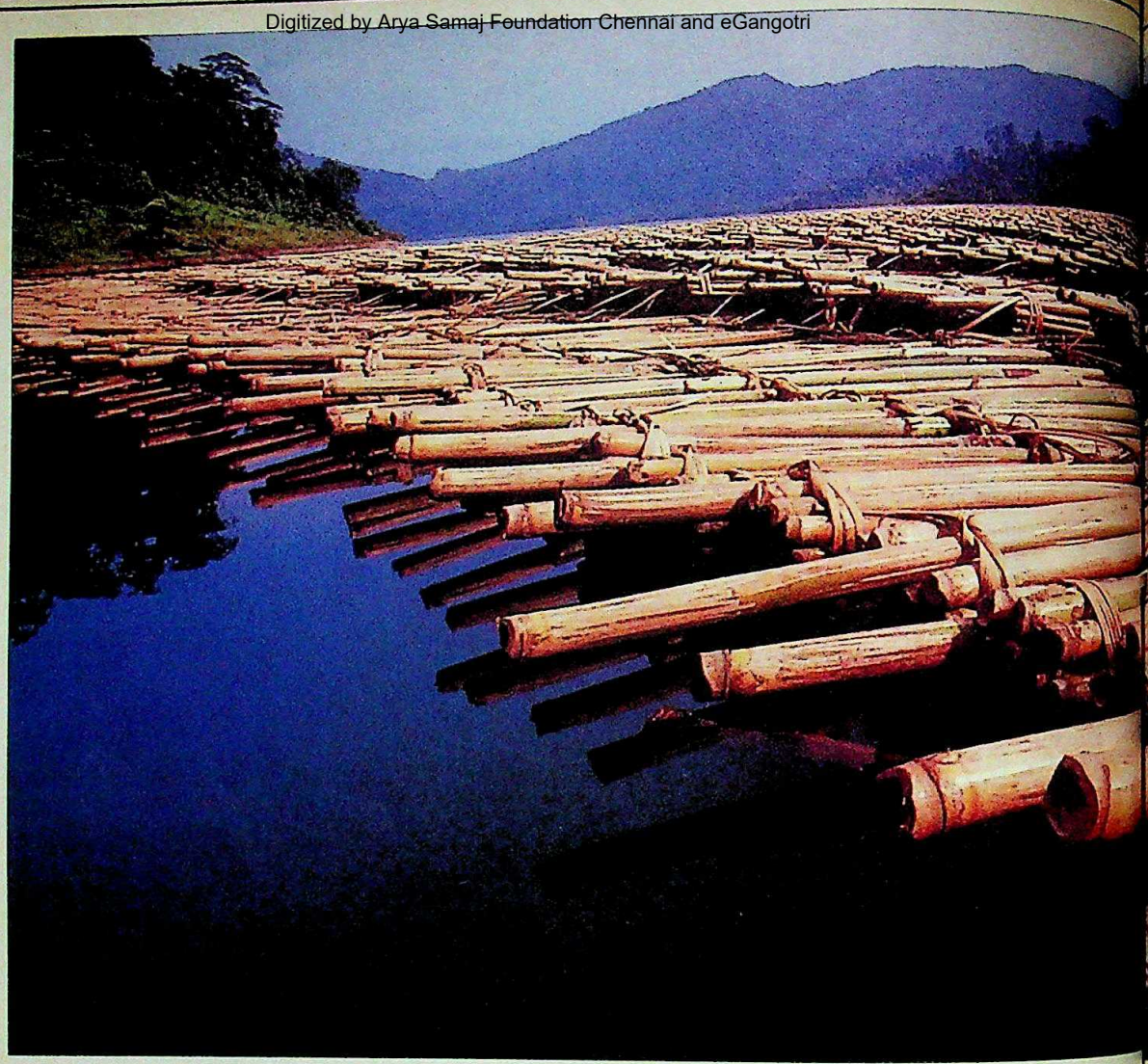

The reeds have to sail across many rapids and falls before coming ashore to the state bambo

marks their intimate lives. All the couples in Naragathodu, for instance, have taken to government-sponsored contraception. Admits Prakash, 30: "We have so much time on our hands that we often end up having sex."

But like the 6,000-odd other reed cutters in Kerala, they have their work cut out. From the reserve forests in Idukki, Malappuram and Wynad districts, four lakh metric tonnes of bamboo reed are produced annually. Most of it is consumed by the newsprint sector, but 30,000 metric tonnes are bought by the Kerala State Bamboo Development Corporation to make mats, baskets and reinforced plywood. After two decades of its existence, the corporation is able to provide employment to 2,500 reed cutters, apart from three lakh part-time weavers.

THE cutters have had it both good and bad. They get a steady income but miss the killing that could be made during the rainy season when private buyers would be willing to pay the earth for scarce bamboo. With the entry of the corporation, however, reed extraction has been regulated. And the procurement has been stepped up: from 92 lakh reeds in 1984-'85 to 148 lakh in 1990-'91. But for some, times are harder than ever. Says Rammohan, 68, a reed cutter in Pooyamkutty: "Ten years ago, I had a house of my own. Now even that is gone."

This consciousness of having no safety net runs like a pattern through their lives. There is no social security or life insurance to help them and they are wary of pushing for change through their unions. Their only incentive is that the corporation gives them 9 per cent worth of the total reed extracted. They have no access to any rural welfare scheme. And accidents do happen—with the nearest

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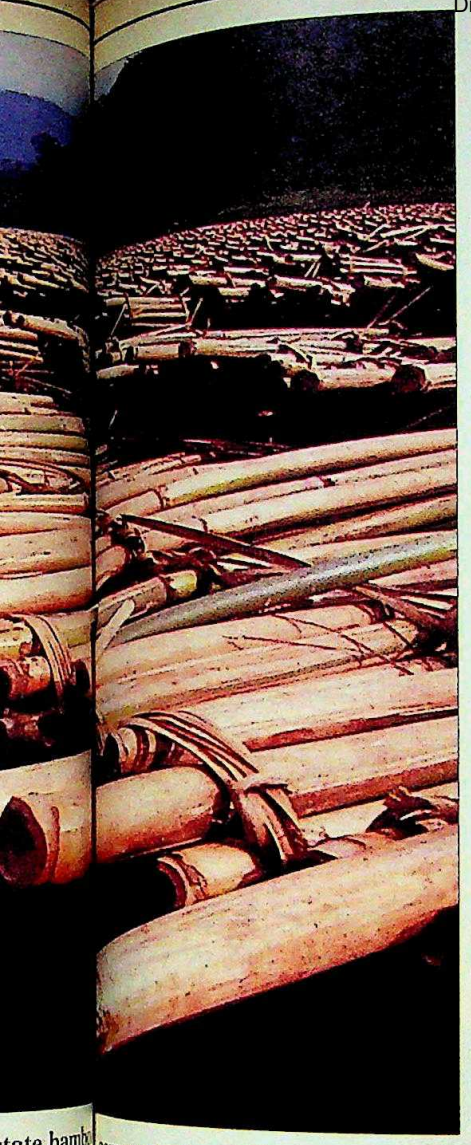
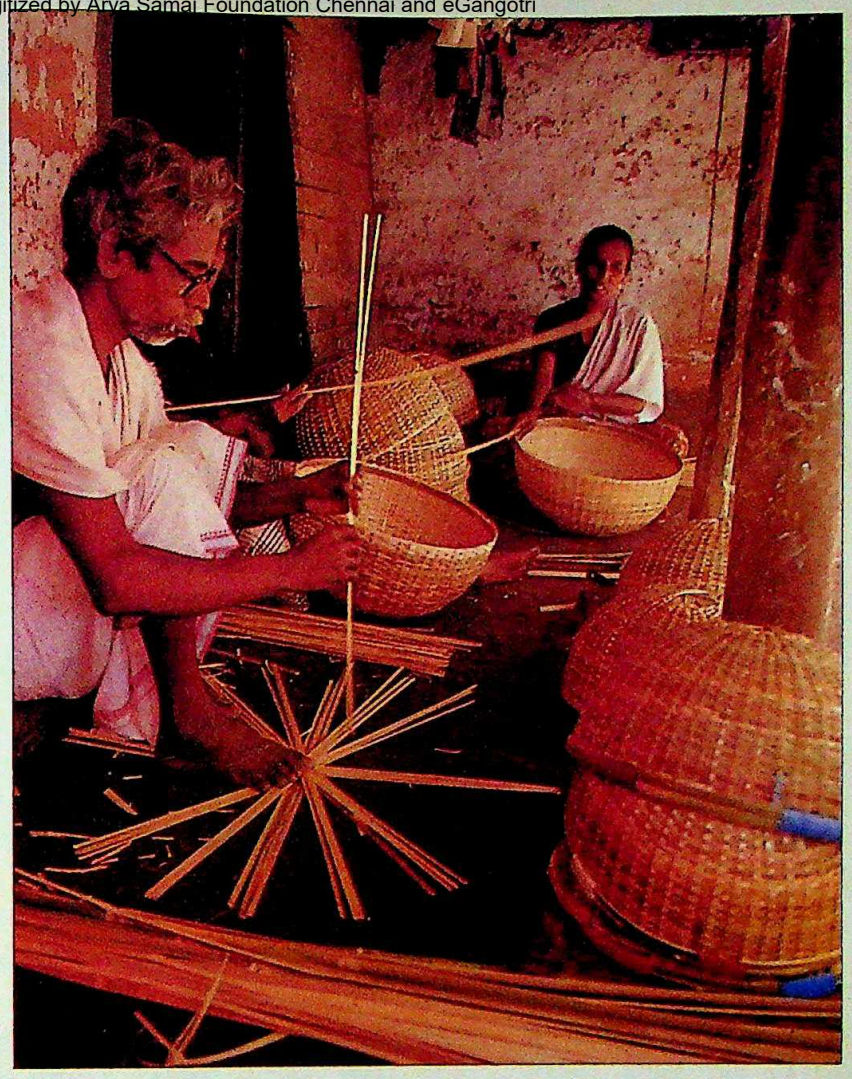
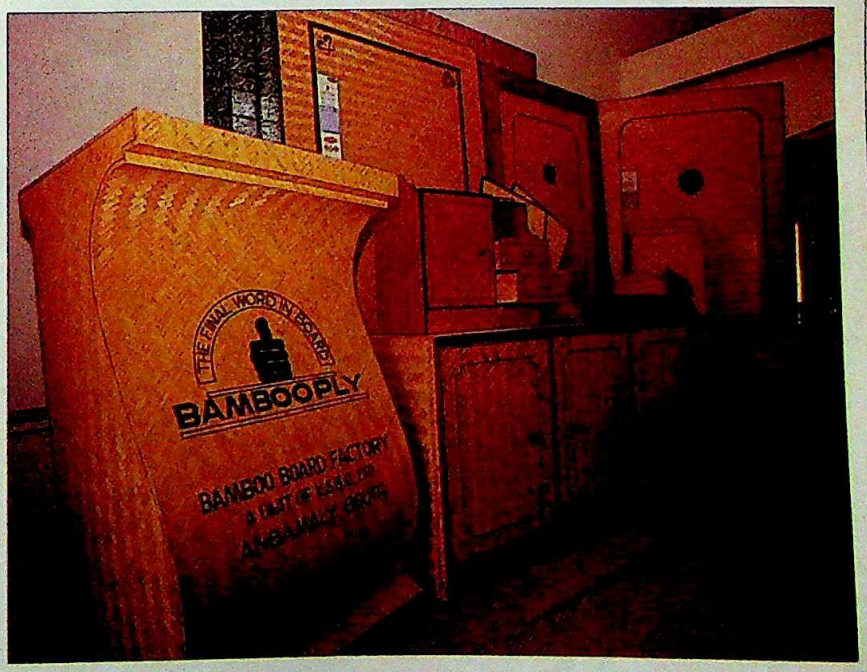


corporation's collection centres.

clinic miles away, more often than not, they end fatally. Then, being away from home has its hazards. Many men have become drunkards. Says Antony, 47, who was partially blinded by a falling reed: "Sometimes we feel like nobody's people." The lives of the weavers based in Ernakulam district are no better. But for some like Girlie, who lives with her husband in Naragathodu, survival is a miracle. Says she: "Every afternoon, I thank God for letting us live another day." In the face of such an indomitable spirit, even the harsh surroundings have to relent. ■



The bamboo weavers eke out as meagre a livelihood as the cutters.



The end product reaches a far and alien destination.

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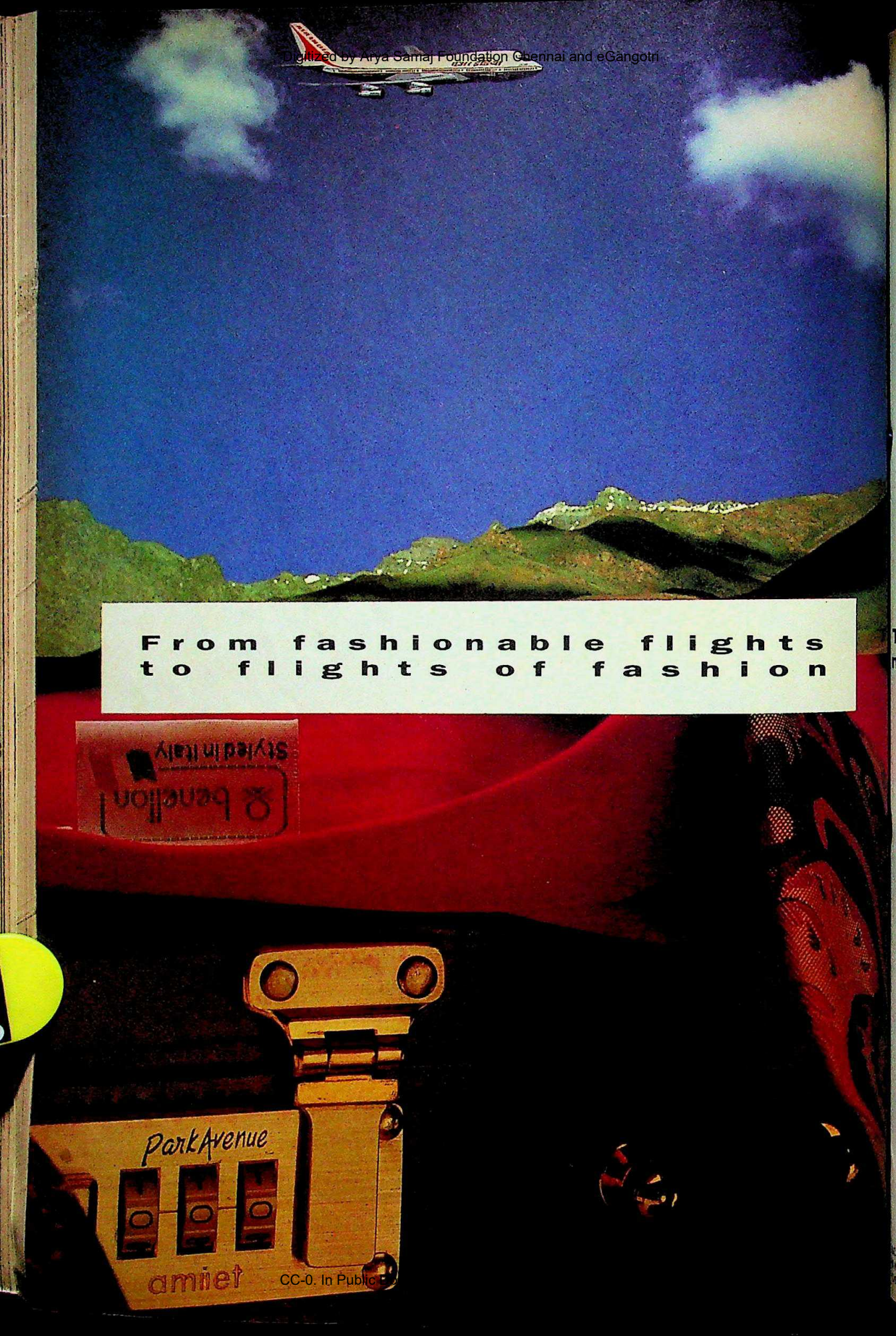

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CARPET EXPORTS

The Old Magic is Missing

The once-booming industry is facing a slump with prices peaking, tastes changing—and with the competition delivering the goods.

By SOUTIK BISWAS
in Bhadohi and Mirzapur

PLUSH, colonial-style bungalows with boxer hounds and Dobermanns behind imposing gates. And on impossibly narrow, twisting streets, Mercedes Benzes and Toyotas jostle for space with bullock-carts and auto-rickshaws.

In Bhadohi and Mirzapur, about an hour's drive south-west of Varanasi, this scene isn't unusual. Here, India's carpet barons hold court, and buyers from across the world come to pick up their wares. About 80 per cent of the country's Rs 539 crore carpet exports—all hand-knotted—in 1990-91 came from this thriving carpet belt. The rest is split between Kashmir, Agra, Jaipur and Shahjahanpur.

Only this year, things don't look very good. Buyers still crowd the market, but a combination of high prices, competition, changing tastes and the stigma of child labour is threatening to put a damper on the trade. Says Ravi Patodia, a Bhadohi exporter who notched up Rs 5 crore last year: "For the first time in 20 years, we are facing a real shortage of orders."

The All India Carpet Manufacturers Association has scaled down its 1991-92 target by Rs 150 crore to Rs 600 crore. This is a negative growth rate—exports need to touch Rs 650 crore to maintain last year's levels in real terms, after the rupee devaluation. There is no fall-back of sales in the domestic market, as they represent less than 1 per cent of the exportable figure.

Knocks are already being felt. E. Hill and Company—the oldest in the business—in nearby Khamaria has recorded a drop in export turnover from Rs 9 crore in 1989-90 to Rs 5 crore the following year. This time around, the figure is expected to remain the

The projected increase in exports for 1991-92 is illusory—in real terms, it will drop to $230 million from $299 million last year.

Photographs by SAIBAL DAS

Foreign buyers in Bhadohi: they could very easily be lured away

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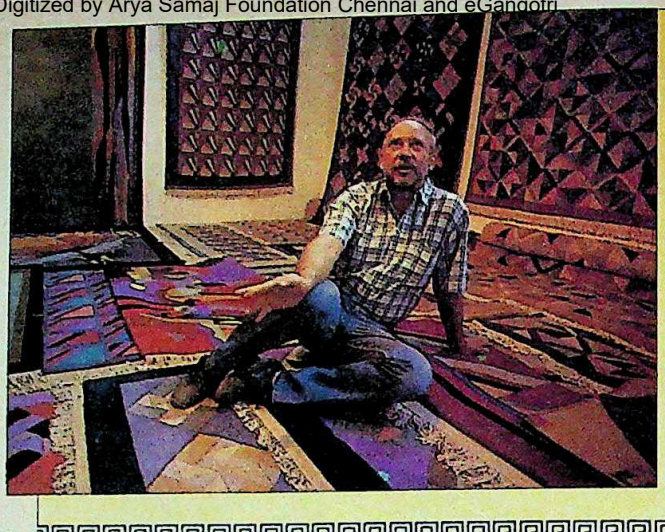
same, which actually registers a drop in dollar terms. Anup Kapur, who carts carpets here from Shahjahanpur, 450 km away, expects a halving in sales this year to Rs 30 lakh. "The picture," he says, "is very gloomy." This spectre is mirrored in the other carpet manufacturing areas.

A problem is that although Indian carpets are top-rate, they are expensive. This has come at a bad time, as the prices of Persian carpets—still considered number one—have plunged. Pakistani, Chinese and Nepalese carpets are cheaper than the Indian variety—premium four by six feet woollen carpets cost between Rs 7,000-20,000 depending on the level of craftsmanship—and a recession-hit West is opting for them.

India's traditional markets—Germany, which buys one-third of Indian exports, and the US, which picks up a little over 30 per cent—have cooled off. A cost-push effect is likely to worsen the situation. The price of imported yarn—half the industry's requirements are imported—has jumped from Rs 65 to Rs 150 a kg after a duty increase last year and the recent devaluation.

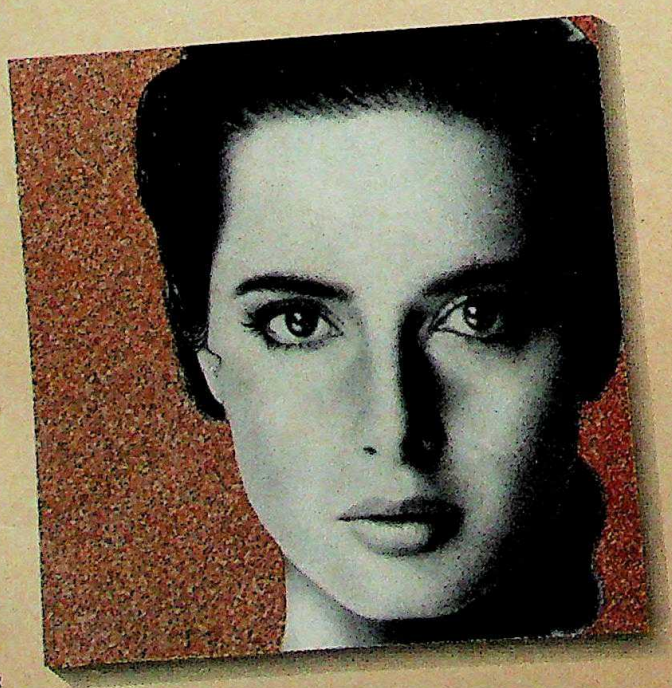


"Times of the traditional Indo-Persian carpets are irrevocably over. The trend today is designer carpets."

JURGEN WISSENBACH
German Importer Owner, ICT Wissenbach Frankfurt

THEN there is the change of tastes, especially in Germany. Indian carpets favour the so-called Indo-Persian style, with rich craft-work in deep blues and reds. The demand these days is more for simple motifs done with pastel or light backgrounds. Nepal has been quick to pick up on this, and is registering a steady 20-per cent rise in exports in dollar terms, and is expected to cross $100 million (Rs 260 crore) this year. "Earlier, Indian carpets used to be the big seller, but no longer," says Maria Verhoeven, a representative of a Dutch importing firm, Jannsens. "Nepalese carpets are the in thing now—they have new and novel designs and also

NAVEEN TILES ARE A LOT LIKE AN INTERESTING WOMAN



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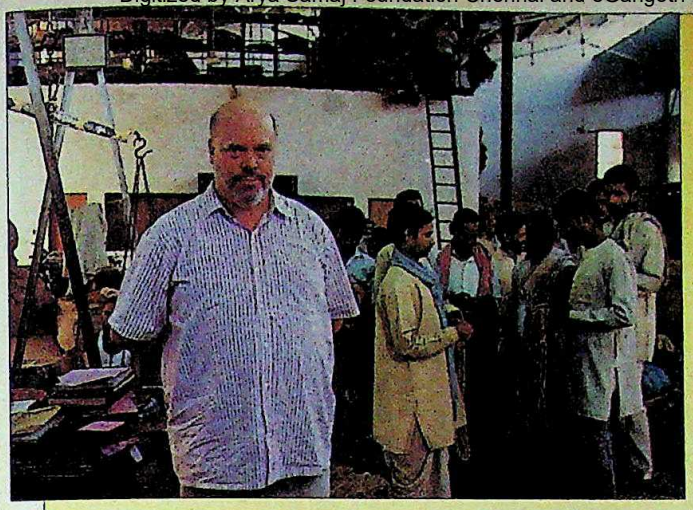
outprice Indian carpets."

A sure-fire trend seems to be a shift to lightly designed *dhurries*, which represent a little over 7 per cent of exports. "Times of the traditional Indo-Persian carpets are irrevocably over," says Jurgen Wissenbach, owner of Frankfurt-based ICT Wissenbach, a firm which imported Rs 20 crore worth of Indian carpets last year. Even Iran, he says, which earlier refused to switch over from traditional designs, is now going the designer way.

This means a faster turnover of designs to suit the market. The good news is that Indian weavers are adaptable—a well-honed survival instinct, as 1.5 crore people are dependent on the business. Besides, even importers say that current fashions are fads and there is a chance that the circle may come back to traditional motifs.

The bad news is that even if it does—in fact, even before it does—Indian carpets have to contend with a growing lobby in the West to boycott Indian wares. The reason: the carpet industry depends heavily on child labour, with as many as 7.5 lakh children between 5-12 years of age employed in the trade. "One morning we can wake up to the news that carpet imports from India are being banned because of child labour," says Edward Oakley, the British managing director of Mirzapur-based Obeetee Limited, the largest carpet manufacturer in the belt with Rs 15.5 crore of exports. "The image abroad matters a lot."

When the Government itself isn't doing much about it, people in the Bhadohi-Mirzapur region are not expecting miracles overnight. At best, they can stall public opinion abroad by pushing quality, innovative Indian products at unbeatable prices. "There is a lesson in all this for us," says Patodia. And one that India has to learn very quickly. ■



"One morning we can wake up to the news that carpet imports from India are being banned because of child labour."

EDWARD OAKLEY
Managing Director, Obeetee Limited, Mirzapur

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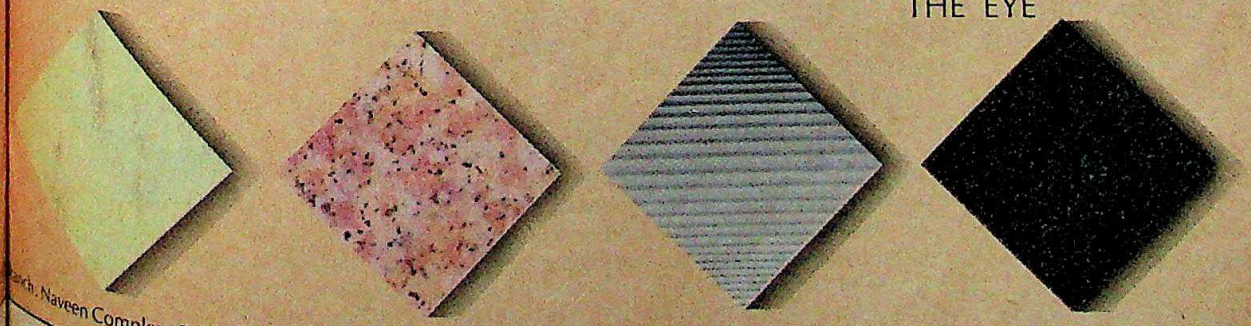

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TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

THE North Block is witnessing hectic lobbying these days. Different industrial houses, say insiders, are trying to push their candidates for the post of Revenue Secretary which for the first time has been given to the Finance Secretary as an additional charge. The current finance boss, K.P. Geethakrishnan, held solo charge of revenue before his new appointment. All along, there has been a separate official for the revenue job, where one has to oversee the two critical revenue-collecting agencies, the Central Board of Excise and Customs and the Central Board of Direct Taxes. As well as the tracking agencies, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and the Enforcement Directorate. The IAS and the Indian revenue service lobbies are both upset with Geethakrishnan's dual charge. There are three personnel files lying with the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet—which Prime Minister Narasimha Rao heads—but as of now, no decision has been taken on a candidate. Some officials say there is a likelihood that the present arrangement will continue.

A WAY OUT

MANY people know when it comes to palm oil, Malaysia tops with 60 per cent of world production. The country earned $2 billion last year from exports. What is not as well known is the role of Indian companies in the effort. While only three of Malaysia's 37 palm oil refineries belong to Indians, they refine over one-third—2.2 million tonnes in 1990—of the production. The major players: Aditya Vikram and Sudershan Kumar Birla. This is a very strong pitch for setting up overseas joint ventures by Indian companies. As a result, India earns foreign exchange, and Indian companies get integrated in the international network.

WINTER WONDER?

ARVIND Mills managing director Sanjay Lalbhai has always approached marketing innovatively. Now, he wants to sell air-conditioners in winter. His company Amtrex Ambience Private Limited is launching a campaign on November 18, to sell air-conditioners with Hitachi technology. The tack, aimed at companies, pitches for them to sell old air-conditioners to employees at book value—assuming depreciation for five years, at Rs 7,500 a piece. Alongside, buy Amtrex's new Shizuka models, and claim depreciation. Plus, save on maintenance through a warranty for the new machines. Amtrex will need a novel approach—a 1.5 tonne air-conditioner costs Rs 38,000.

AN EMPTY BOARD

THERE could soon be a vacuum at the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). Six of the nine members will either complete their five-year term or retire next year. Leading them is Chairman R. Ganapati whose term ends in January. Government sources say there is uncertainty about his reappointment. Next is the senior-most member M.S. Narayanan who is also in the same boat. The other four members are due to retire between next May and October. Nobody knows who will replace them yet. Also, most of the staff would have completed five years' deputation from various ministries and would revert to their parent bodies. Moreover, the Finance Ministry has not finalised recruitment rules for the BIFR, which according to officials, requires amending the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985.

TAKING INTEREST

MOST economists say that what matters while examining interest rates is the real cost. Or, the nominal rate minus the rate of inflation. For this, inflation is considered over a period of 5-10 years. Going by this, India's real rate of interest far exceeds those of the US,

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

	PRIME RATE	RATE OF INFLATION	REAL RATE OF INFLATION
Hong Kong	9.0%	7.1%	1.9%
US	8.0	4.0	4.0
UK	10.5	6.1	4.4
Australia	13.5	7.8	5.7
Japan	7.0	1.3	5.7
Singapore	7.3	1.5	5.8
Malaysia	7.3	1.5	5.8
Thailand	15.5	3.2	12.3
INDIA	20.0	7.7	12.3
South Korea	18.9	5.0	13.9

Source: World Development Report 1991, Far Eastern Economic Review

the UK, as well as the Pacific Rim tigers with the sole exception of South Korea. Low interest rates have allowed them capital-intensive production, to reduce costs and improve quality. High rates of interest can only hold us back. Indian policy-makers had better consider this when playing with the interest rate structure.

FOLLOW THY NEIGHBOUR

IT'S time to take a cue from Pakistan. In round two of privatisation, it is offering public sector companies worth $ 3 billion (about Rs 7,800 crore). And to absorb potential labour trouble, there's a retrenchment scheme sewn up. A fund would be set up—in part from the sale proceeds—from which workers, if they resign, will get five months wages for each year of work. For the others, the new owners have to assure at least one year's employment. Some government officials say it may be a good idea to follow Pakistan—considering we have just been talking of workers' safety funds, not formulating any concrete plan.

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BLACK MONEY SCHEMES

Where's the in-flow?

Nobody is expecting the Government's schemes to work wonders

IT seems a bit like poetic justice. To get back in the black, the Government is banking on black money, which it helped create in the first place. Skewed tax laws have helped the parallel economy to thrive, and now, there is almost Rs 70,000 crore in black money being generated every year. The flight of capital has resulted in an overseas stash which government officials conservatively place at $50 billion (about Rs 1,30,000 crore).

To tap this so-called reserve, the Government has floated five schemes, of which two have to do with money from abroad *(see chart)*. Nobody is giving the domestic schemes much of a chance. Since 1946, there have been seven black money schemes—a combination of demonetisation, voluntary disclosures and sale of special bearer bonds—that have fetched a mere Rs 1,400 crore. And the solitary disclosure scheme for foreign assets, launched in 1986, brought in just Rs 67 crore. While the current drive is more intensive, not many are impressed. "Amnesty schemes have never stopped generation of black money," says Amaresh Bagchi, director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP).

The NIPFP director, who orchestrated a 1985 report by the agency—the only detailed survey of the black money situation to date—feels the current schemes will not work and are focussed more on retrieving money from abroad to shore up foreign exchange reserves. The Government is in total agreement there, and in fact, makes no bones about its real intention. "Once foreign exchange stocks increase, we can liberalise imports," says Minister of State for Finance Rameshwar Thakur. "This will also mean greater customs revenue and excise as industrial production increases." Finance Minister Manmohan Singh—who in July had admitted that a lot of the money coming through so-called NRI schemes is actually Indian cash—reiterated the same point last fortnight. At a New Delhi conference, Singh mentioned that import restrictions would be eased once foreign exchange reserves touched $2.5 billion (Rs 6,500 crores). Right now they're a little over Rs 5,000 crores.

The real problem is to gauge how much money will return to India. Thakur was upbeat last month and spoke of Rs 5,000 crore when the schemes expire by end-November. Since then, the minister has clammed up completely, and declines to comment on

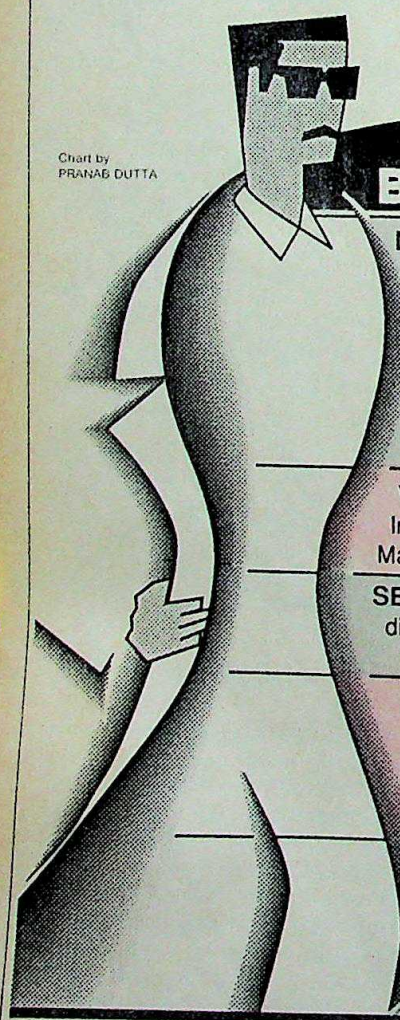

Chart by
PRANAB DUTTA

BLACK SCHEMES

NATIONAL HOUSING BANK SCHEME: People can deposit any amount of money (with a minimum limit of Rs 10,000) with NHB without disclosing the source of funds. 40% of the funds will be impounded by NHB for its housing schemes, and the balance 60% can be withdrawn immediately. No income tax is levied on the 60%, but taxes are payable on the income that accrues from the investment made with this money. Wealth tax is applicable from the year 1992-93. Basically, the Government is levying a money-laundering fee of 40%. Open till November 30, 1991.

VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE SCHEME: Under Section 237 A of the Income Tax Act and Section 18 B of the Wealth Tax Act. Open till March 31, 1992.

SETTLEMENT COMMISSION: Income tax disputes can be settled by disclosure to the Commission. Once the Commission accepts it, the income tax department will not be allowed to appeal. Open till March 31, 1992.

FOREIGN REMITTANCE SCHEME (for NRIs): Any amount of foreign exchange can be remitted to an Indian resident without declaring the source. No tax proceedings will be instituted against people to whom money is gifted. No gift tax, no income tax, no wealth tax for assessment year commencing prior to April 1992. Open till Nov. 30, 1991.

INDIA DEVELOPMENT BONDS: Total amnesty and immunity from disclosure of source and nature of funds. Carry higher interest of 9.5% as compared to 3-year FCNR deposits and have a lock-in period of 5 years. Are fully repatriable in US dollars. No income, wealth and gift taxes. Open till Nov. 30, 1991.

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a possible figure and Finance Ministry officials pass the buck for any estimates. Prodded, they admit to a little over half the minister's figure, the equivalent of $1 billion. Pitiful, but right now, Finance Ministry mandarins are grasping any straws they can find.

Sops may work to a point, but short of a total overhaul of the system, it's impossible to control black money at home. Simply put, the situation has to be attractive to turn black money into regular, white funds.

A major problem area is different rates of excise duty, within similar products. For instance, in textiles and cigarettes, this leads to tax evasion through mis-classification of output. In textiles, separate rates of excise are charged for cloth of different varieties and counts. Manufacturers, say analysts, regularly downgrade a product to pay lower rates of excise. This alone generates Rs 1,000 crore in black money a year. For the entire manufacturing sector—and this includes areas such as steel—evasion in excise, customs and sales taxes accounts for over Rs 50,000 crore in black money every year. A way out is to have broader product categories, lower excise and import tariffs, but the Government is silent on this count. "Nobody is talking about these things," says S.L. Rao, director-general of the National Council for Applied Economic Research. "Till this is tackled, the black money problem cannot be solved."

In the case of real estate, the high rates of stamp-duty—ranging between 14.5-28 per cent in different states—are a major cause for under-valuation of property and unreported deals, or both. A recommendation by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry suggests that duties be reduced to 2 to 3 per cent to prevent evasion. Another hurdle is the Urban Land Ceiling Act, which reduces the supply of land and creates a black market. Roughly over Rs 13,000 crore a year is generated through the real estate route. "Stamp-duties are too high," admits V. Rajaraman, a senior partner at Thakur, Vaidyanath Aiyar and Company—a New Delhi tax consultancy firm—and a member of a high-level committee set up by the Ministry of Finance to recommend changes in the tax structure. "We will be looking into various proposals to rationalise the structure, including possible lowering of taxes." The committee will submit its interim report by November end which is likely to be incorporated in the next Budget.

However, there is one problem. The Government may not be able to control the fiscal deficit which, according to estimates, could cross Rs 40,000 crore for the year—above the Rs 37,727 crore estimated in the 1991-92 Budget and the limit set by the IMF for loan facilities. In this situation, the finance minister will be treading a thin line between the conventional wisdom of raising tax rates to increase revenue and a more rational approach of lowering rates to raise more revenue.

The second stance works on a simple assumption. If you have to pay less, there is more likelihood of hiding less, therefore widening the tax net and increasing revenues. This was demonstrated in 1985-86, when the maximum rate of income tax was lowered from 61.9 per cent to 50 per cent. As a result, incomes declared by the self-employed increased almost three times to Rs 9,654 crore by 1988-89. There is a growing realisation that this plan could easily be applied to indirect taxes as well. "This is the only way to ensure tax compliance," says S.S. Bagai, a former Indian Revenue Service official and the author of a recent study on black money. "The current rates of taxation are unenforcable." Given this reality, here is the flip side to the Government's present stand: it may actually go ahead and reduce tax rates in a bid to check its deficit, and satisfy international lending agencies.

Until then, the much-touted black money schemes stay. Which are quite unfathomable as far as their potentials go. "It is too early to talk of the money that will come in from these schemes," says Manohar J. Pherwani, chairman and managing director of the public sector National Housing Bank, which has floated a major scheme to mop up black money from Indian residents. That is an unnerving statement, particularly as the schemes run out in days. —SUNIL JAIN

SHARAD SAXENA

"Amnesty schemes have never been able to stop the generation of black money."

AMARESH BAGCHI
Director, NIPFP

SHARAD SAXENA

"It is too early to talk of the money that will come in from these schemes."

MANOHAR J. PHERWANI
Chairman and Managing Director, NHB

PRASHANT PANJIAR

"Once foreign exchange stocks increase, we can liberalise imports."

RAMESHWAR THAKUR
Minister of State for Finance

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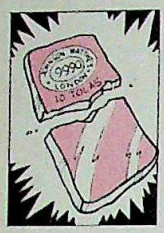
GOLD TRADE

Losing their Profits

Smugglers are squeezed, but not enough



THE gold smuggling trade has again shown who sets the standards by driving up prices. From Rs 4,050 for 10 grams in July, prices touched Rs 4,770 by October. The smugglers were trying to hold on to profits that had been fast depleting due to rising international prices of gold and the Government's black money schemes, that hiked *hawala* rates. The ploy worked, and for once, smugglers are in a bind. And the Government is poised to deal the trade a blow.

This is precisely why, officials say, there is an immediate need to crack down on smugglers, kick off schemes which liberalise gold import, taking away their sustenance. "Indian revenue officials have been demanding the Government liberalise the gold policy," says B.V. Kumar, director, National Institute for Customs, Excise and Narcotics. "Something needs to be done and fast." But this isn't likely to happen.

The trade works with simple rules. The greater the gap between international and Indian gold prices—and lesser the *hawala* rates, which means less premium to buy dollars and thus gold abroad—greater the profits. If this difference narrows, the only way out is to push up domestic gold prices. Smugglers have lucked out here, as the downtrend came with the start of the wedding season in July—which drives up the demand ten fold—with a run up to Diwali, another heavy buying season. The idea, enforcement officials say, is to capitalise on this trend, and try to ensure prices touch Rs 5,000 for 10 grams by end-November. India's annual demand is 170 tonnes, and smuggling feeds 95 per cent of it.

The smugglers' profits have been badly squeezed ever since the devaluation in July. Also, international gold prices have jumped. For instance, in London, the cost of 10 grams went up by Rs 303 to Rs 3,783 between July and August. For the same period, the *hawala* rate for the dollar went up by a rupee to Rs 34.50. Pinched out, the gulf between international and domestic prices of gold narrowed to Rs 478, from Rs 571 a month earlier. The result of the combination: a drop in profits from 40 to 25 per cent, say officials.

This pattern continued and by September, the difference had narrowed to Rs 39—last month, it had moved up marginally to Rs 74, but profit margins had dropped lower from August levels, to end up below 10 per cent in November. Hence the move to push up prices in India, in a bid to regain the profit margin. The situation may ease after November, when *hawala* rates are likely to drop—the black money schemes will end, and dollars will be less in demand. That would mean more profits, but if international prices still rise—which is expected—the smuggling trade will still be shaky.

Specially as a large amount of gold is stockpiled in Dubai. Intelligence officials say that kingpins such as Dawood Ibrahim, Qasim Rajput, Haji Ashraf and Kanwarjeet Singh—had piled up 200 tonnes of gold just after the Gulf war, and have since found it difficult to move this hoard, worth about Rs 7,200 crore. The overland Pakistan route has dried up, and Bombay is well-covered by Indian sleuths. So, smugglers have been forced to develop coastal networks in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa to bring in the gold. The problem is so acute, intelligence officials say, that a large quantity of the hoarded gold had to be dumped in the Maldives and Singapore. "Smugglers are really stretched," says a top department of revenue intelligence official.

But despite so much knowledge, the Government has done precious little. Policing is not the only answer, as less than 3 per cent of smuggled gold gets picked up every year. The Natarajan Committee, set up in 1989 to study a liberal gold import policy, recommended that NRIs or even residents returning after a minimum stay of three months abroad be allowed to bring in gold after paying nominal duty. Pakistan, for example, levies just 3 per cent customs duty on the gold value, while India seizes any gold over 27 grams, worth about Rs 12,500 at current rates.

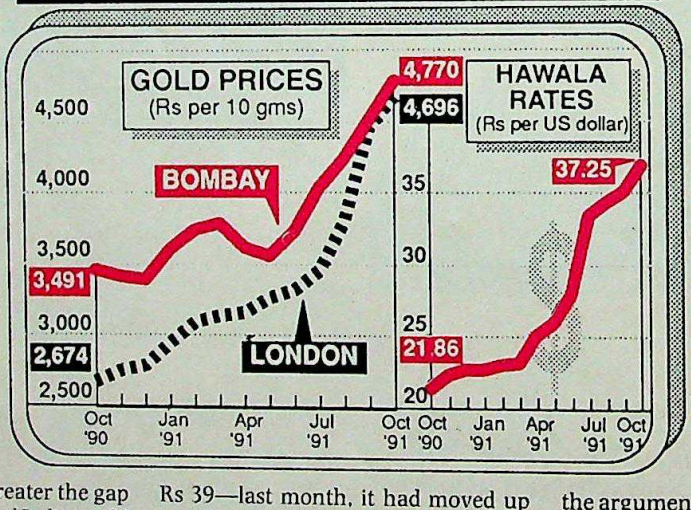
Liberal imports, would help the Government meet the demand for gold in the country—even raise customs revenue—curb smuggling by breaking the black trade's monopoly, and reduce the domestic price of gold. Taking the argument further, jewellers would benefit—along with customers—and gold jewellery exports may become price competitive with raw material costs dropping. The fact is, the Government—actually, the last three administrations—has not done anything about it. "Smuggling will continue till we have a clear-cut policy on gold import," says Donald Ingty, a deputy director in the Department of Revenue Intelligence. He adds: "Since smugglers have no control over either the international price or the *hawala* rate, they will continue to control the Indian market price."

That's the pity. Even when it can, the Government does little.

—ANIRUDHYA MITRA

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

SMUGGLERS ARE SEEING REDUCED PROFITS WITH INTERNATIONAL GOLD PRICES AND HAWALA RATES GOING UP



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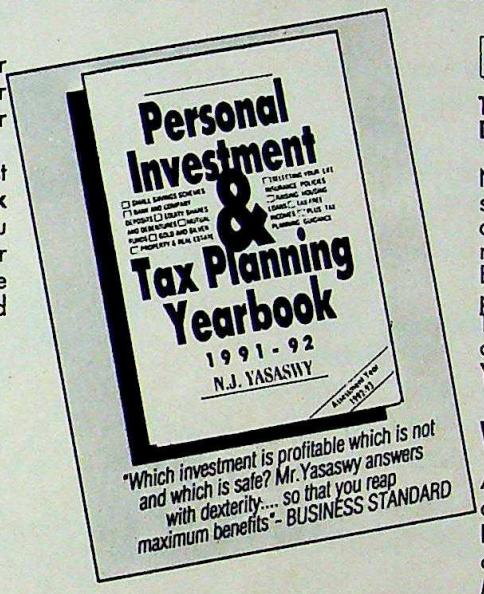

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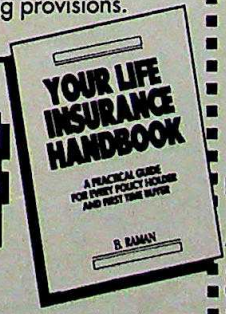

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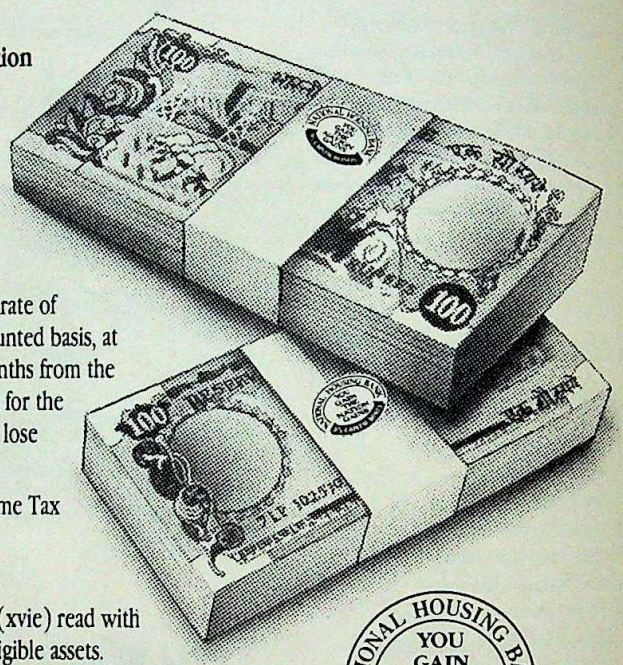

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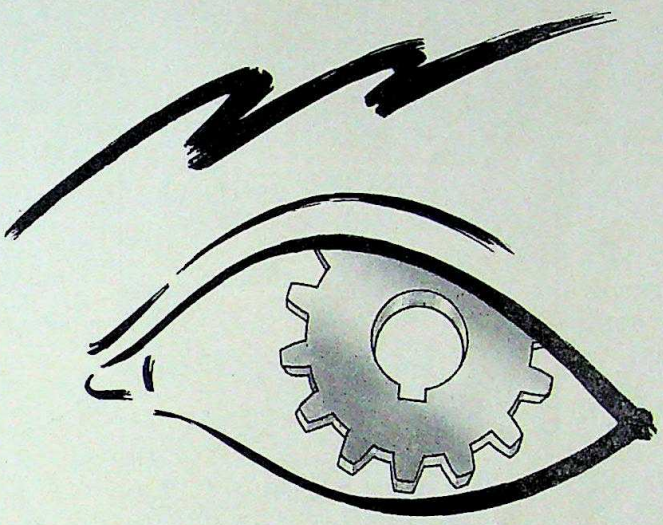

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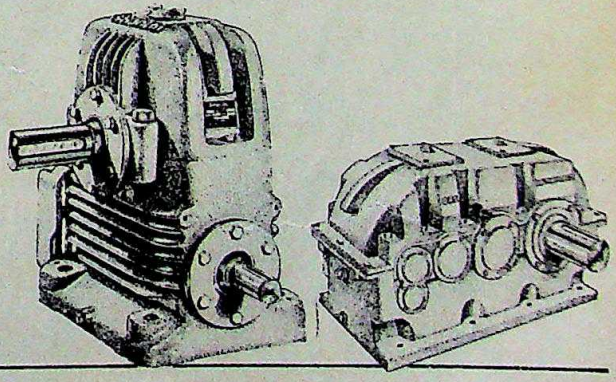

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CEMENT INDUSTRY

Standing Firm

Tussle over reducing prices

IT's a head-on collision. The Government wants the cement industry to reduce prices, and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh has even used the threat of deflation—with increasing prices, this has been the Government's current standard operating procedure—to underscore this point. And the industry is adamant about blocking any moves to bring back a price control regime from which it was partially freed in 1982 and in March 1989, let off the hook completely.

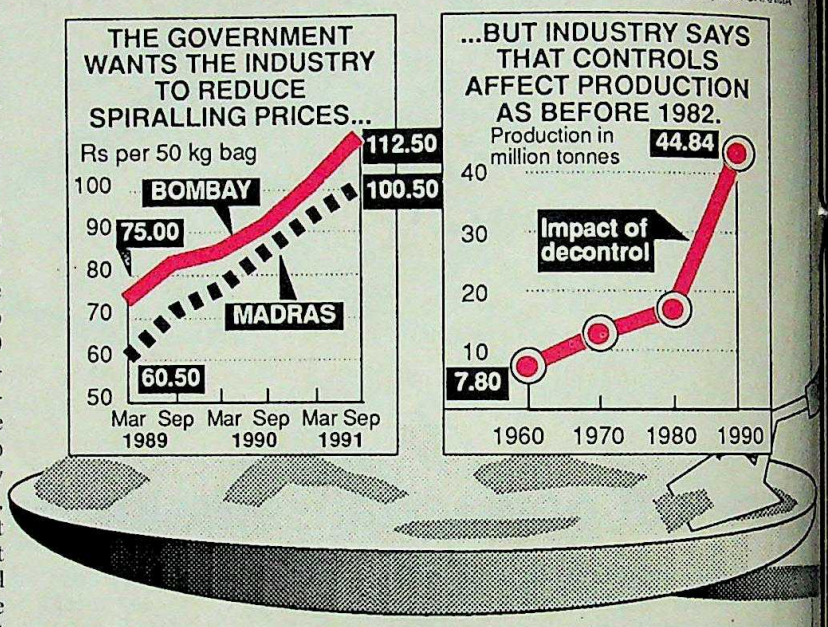
From Rs 65 to Rs 70 for a 50 kg bag then, rates have today jumped to an average of Rs 110 to Rs 115 a bag. There is also regional disparity in the rates, with cement ruling at Rs 84 to Rs87 down south and as high as Rs140 to Rs 145 in the cement-starved north-eastern region. Cement being a location-specific industry, most units are generally located in the south, close to the limestone deposits to reduce raw material transportation cost. As a result, prices tend to be generally lower in that region. However, it is the high freight charges that add up to comprise the final retail price elsewhere. In particular, the Government feels that the rise since last year, of about 14 per cent, is far too high. "The ex-factory cement price can definitely be brought down by Rs 5 to Rs 10 per bag," says P.J. Kurien, minister of state for industry.

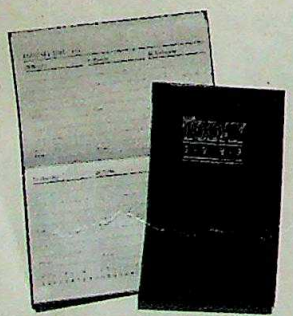
No go, says the industry, which recorded a turnover of Rs 6,000 crore in 1990-91, minus excise and freight charges. In fact, according to industry observers, although prices are higher than before, they are still far too low for the trade to set up a new unit. "Investment costs have really shot up and today, at least Rs 300 crore is needed for a 1-million-tonne-a-year plant, which is double what was required five years ago," says Yadu Hari Dalmia, president of New Delhi-based Dalmia Cements (Bharat) Limited. He goes on to add: "Financial matters have become even more difficult with the Government decision to increase the equity ratio of promoters' contribution to that of the financial institution from 1:2 to 40:60."

Other players in the business say that the industry has been in the doldrums for several decades and it is only now that market rates are fetching close to the true value. With an eye on the future, many of the major cement concerns are now planning to expand production. Larsen and Toubro Limited plans to double its cement capacity to 4 million tonnes. The Jai Prakash group has recently commissioned its second million-tonne plant and is going in for a third. Gujarat Ambuja Cement Limited, a Bombay-based company with a turnover of Rs 130 crore, plans to double its capacity to 1.4 million tonnes.

They're not the only ones. Calcutta-based Birla Jute also plans a 3-million-tonne project while Shree Cement, a Bani Gopal Bangur concern, is

Chart by B.K. SHARMA





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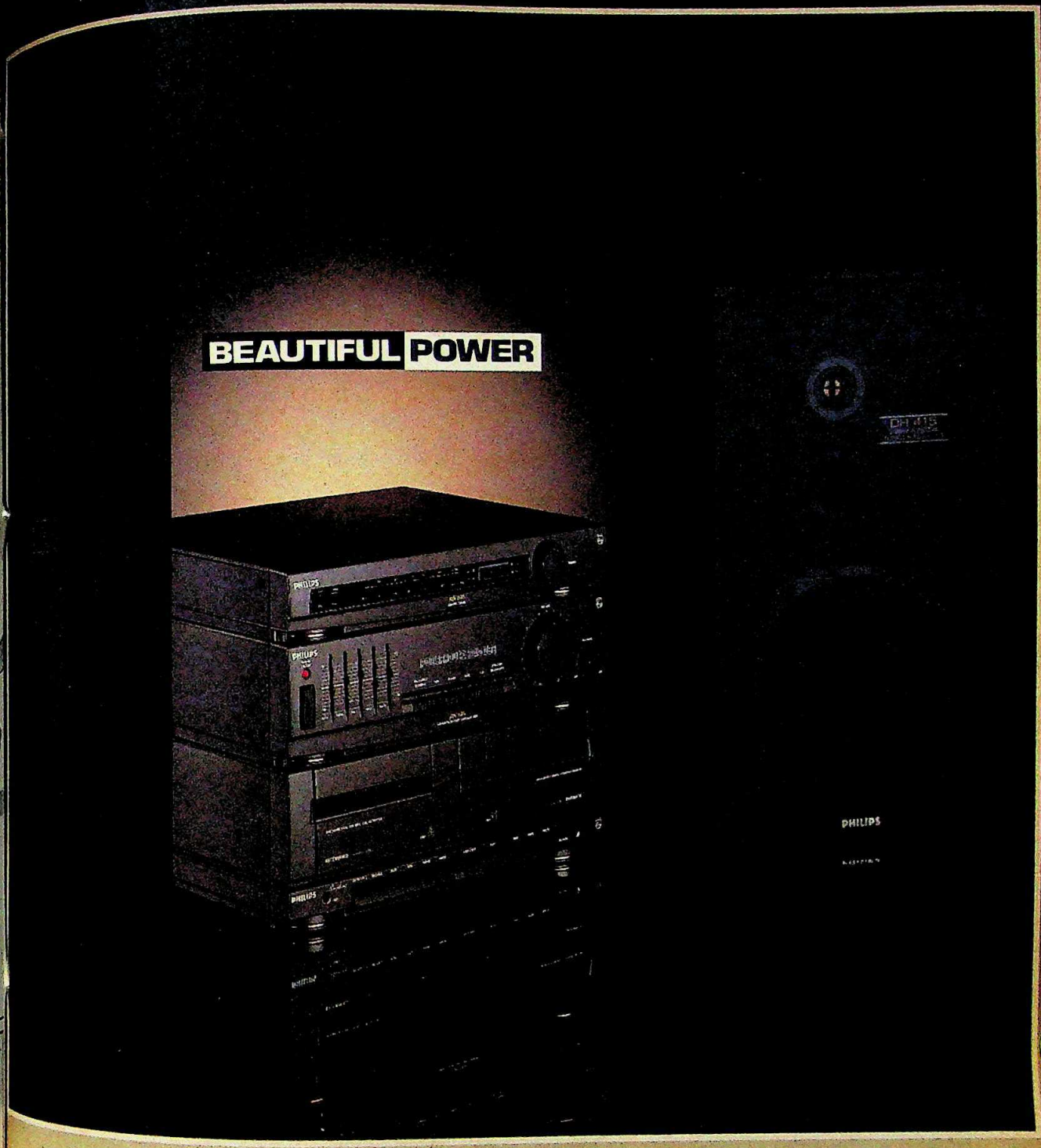

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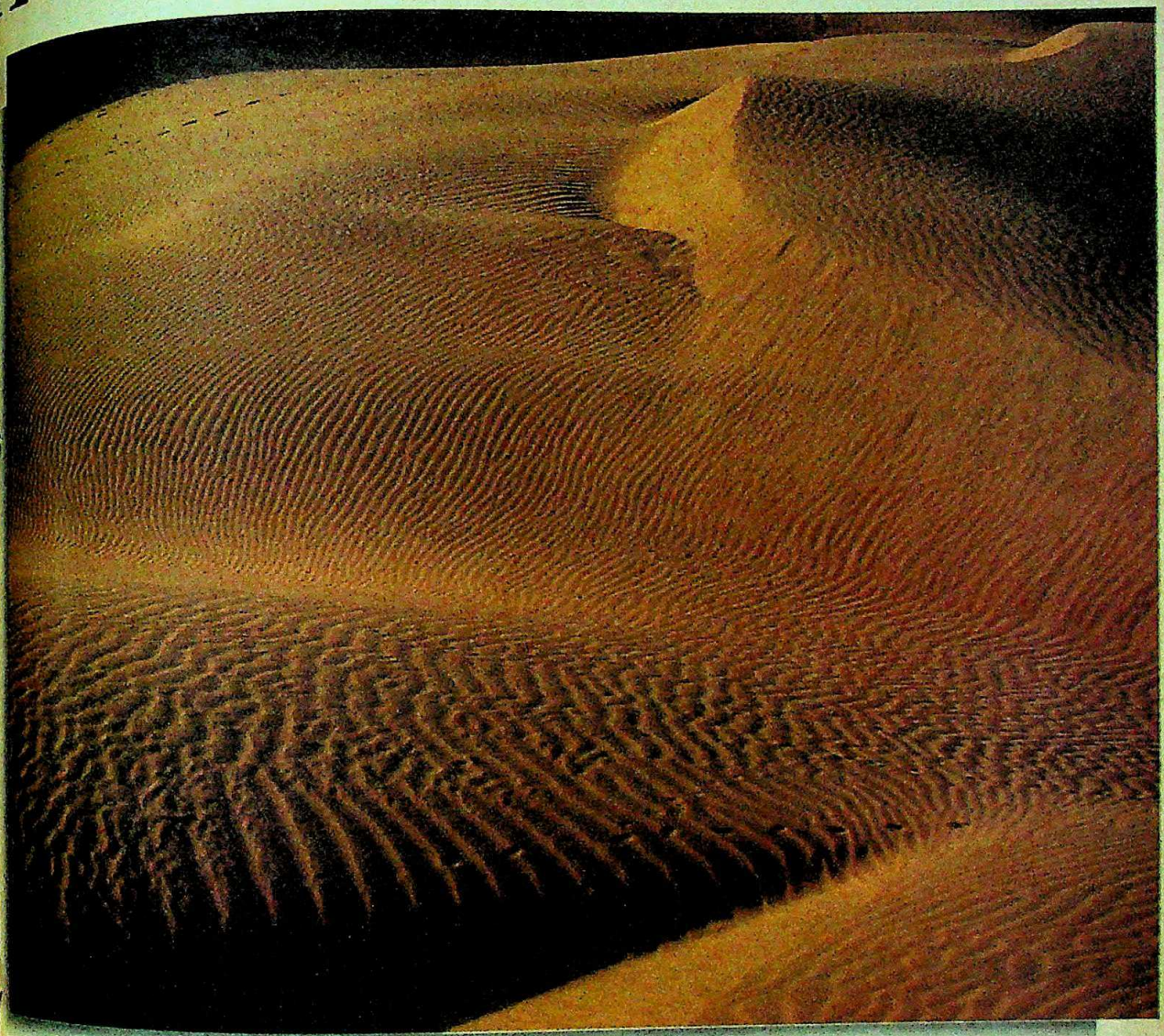

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- PROJECT TIGER CIRCUIT : Jaipur-Tonk-Ranthambor-Jaipur
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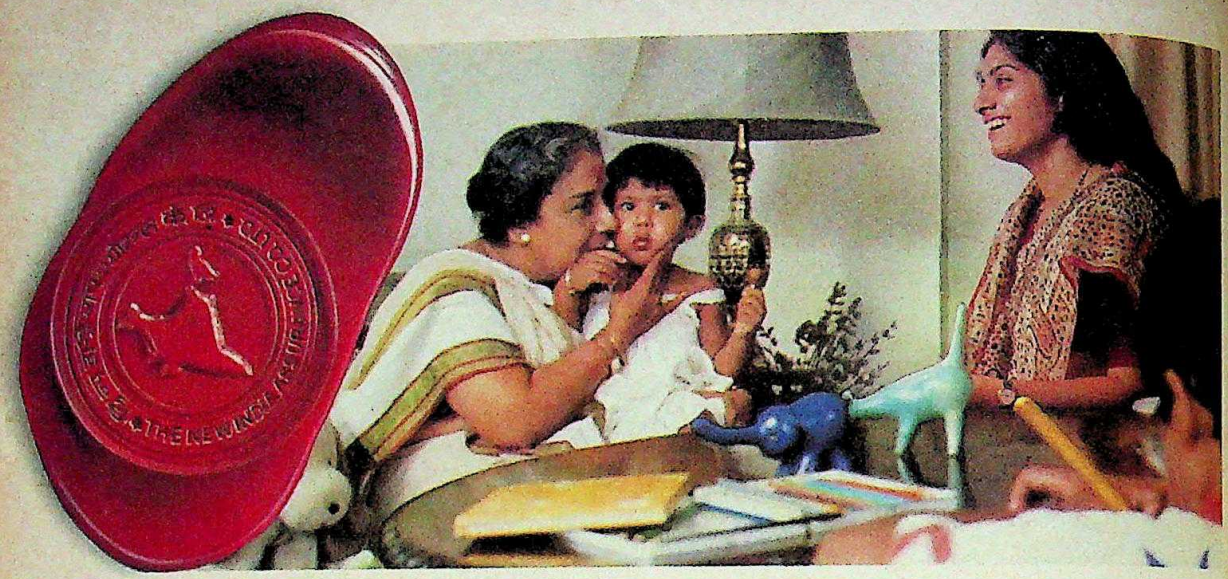

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gearing up for a total production of 1.5 million tonnes as against a third of that today. Gaur Hari Singhania-run JK Cement Works—a division of JK Synthetics—which today has a 1.8-million-tonne capacity, plans to add a million more. The projects involve a minimum investment of over Rs 2,500 crore. The industry says a price roll-back, combined with the raising of the promoters' stake, may stall these plans for sometime to come.

Given the increasing demand for cement, the industry maintains that any adverse Government measures will jeopardise the precarious demand-supply position. As against a demand of 49.79 million tonnes last year, cement production was just 48.75 million tonnes. In fact, it is only in the last four years that the country has achieved self-sufficiency in cement. The industry estimates that by 1994-95, the demand-supply gap will widen, with demand 7 million tonnes more than the projected supply of almost 59 million tonnes. If projects are stalled because of price roll-backs, the gap could widen further.

The effect could be twofold. One: India will have to depend on imports. And two: the gap will ensure that producers are in gravy, because with an increasing gap, they will have the final say on prices. According to some analysts, this is one reason why the industry is reacting to the Government's demands.

On the other hand, demand-supply makes perfect free-market sense. "Who is the finance minister to control prices?" asks V.K. Gupta, adviser (Marketing), with Hyderabad-based Andhra Cement, a Rs 130-crore company. "It is in the Government's and the industry's interest to allow the demand-supply balance to control prices," he says.

Gupta may have a point. The Government picks up close to Rs 1065.44 crore in excise through cement sales. And an increase in prices will mean more revenue, particularly at a time when massive revenue shortfalls are being projected for the year and, moreover, when checking budget deficit is becoming a serious problem.

It isn't clear yet whether Manmohan Singh will buy the argument. However, comments like that could well precipitate a vindictive crackdown. This would indeed be badly timed as far as the industry is concerned—by January, the cartel was hoping to increase prices.

—SHEFALI BHIMAL

Agitating workmen: getting their way

HEC

End Game

Company on the road to ruin

THE Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC) is on a death trail. A cash crunch that makes the Rs 81-crore annual salary bill look an impossibility. Rs 278 crore in accumulated losses that have eroded the capital twice over, blank order books, labour problems, a callous management and a government that reacts too late have pushed the Ranchi-based public sector unit to the brink.

For 1991-92, the company faces losses of Rs 66 crore on a turnover of Rs 375 crore. Last month, the State Bank of India reduced HEC's cash credit limit by Rs 30 crore to Rs 120 crore. "It's as good as dead," says a senior executive.

Last month, under pressure from the Centre and a reformist RBI to prune its rolls, HEC introduced a voluntary retirement scheme. Nearly 4,000 employees—over a fifth of its current strength—responded. But the company had to withdraw when they realised the scheme would cost Rs 20 crore. The only hope for the company now is to enforce a hiring freeze, and bank on the fact that 7,000 employees will retire next year.

HEC—set up in 1958 to make steel plant equipment and castings, among other things—is a lesson in how not to run a company. The state Government interferes constantly, and the 21 unions vie for supremacy.

The management doesn't even push for orders. It lost a Rs 173-crore order to private sector Lurgi India for a Rourkela Steel Plant project because it couldn't identify a technical collaborator in time. Two years ago, it lost the Rs 1,200-crore Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP) modernisation project. It could have picked up a quarter of the project, but had to settle for a Rs 40-crore crane-making crumb—insiders say the DSP management didn't want to give bulk orders to a unit that doesn't deliver.

In the end, everyone's passing the buck. Labour leaders accuse the management of sloth and corruption and of playing one union against the other to stay afloat. In turn, the management guns for the labour. Last fortnight, HEC Chairman and Managing Director P.C. Neogy—the company's 18th chief executive in 30 years, sent an "appraisal" note to the Centre, blaming the unions for the problems.

A way out, say company executives, could be to merge HEC with Steel Authority of India Limited, but the plan has failed as the Centre appears uninterested. Instead, it is now rumoured that HEC may be shut down, and its employees be handed a government-funded retrenchment.

Even if this works, it won't be easy. Last fortnight, when the shut-down rumour was doing the rounds, Bihar's Labour Minister Bashist Narain Singh visited Ranchi, and asserted that his government would resist any moves to close down HEC. Trouble, already. But the way things are, it may be better to push through a quick death—despite labour flare-ups—than to feed a terminally sick organisation.

—FARZAND AHMED

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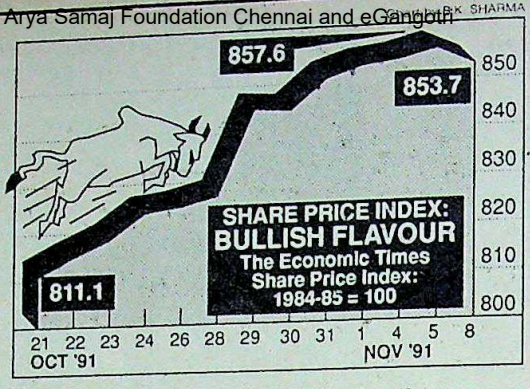
THE MARKETS

Fair Shares

New high in the new year



IF the beginning of *Samvat* 2048 is any pointer to where the share bazaars are headed, then the news isn't all bad. During the *muhurat* trading session on November 5, Diwali day, the markets were up there with the rockets. The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) Sensitive Index crossed the earlier high-mark of 1,912 registered in mid-September to close at 1,917.96. It did dip a little, by 7.16 points when trading closed three days later, but the mood was still upbeat. *The Economic Times* index for ordinary share prices, reflected a similar trend, moving up four points in the first week of November.

Right now, the stock-markets are poised very delicately. While most major scrips gained during the fortnight ended November 8 *(see list of active stocks below)*, there could be a dampening effect once six-monthly corporate results begin coming in. The market sentiment is torn between believing the Government about its economic reform, and the overall credit and import squeeze. According to latest available figures—till end-July—both the index of industrial production and the manufacturing index have shown negative growth rates for the first time this year. And numerous companies are talking of holding back expansion plans. If this trend keeps up, the markets could be in for a spin, even if for a short while.

The Government—and industry—are banking on strong capital markets to keep the fund flow intact. The Government, because its credit squeeze needs to be obviated by the industry picking up cheaper funds from the primary market. And industry, because it doesn't have another option. But for all those making a beeline for the bazaar, here is a word of caution. Says Vimal Bhandari, vice-president, Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services: "Today, only companies with a robust past will be able to tap the capital markets."

A lot depends on the Government shoring up foreign exchange reserves and checking inflation. Because, this will lead to an easing of curbs, and release money both for imports and capital. Both Finance Minister Manmohan Singh and RBI Governor R. Venkitaramanan have hinted at lesser control once the going gets better.

In the end, it comes back to the industry. It has survived four decades, trussed up and shackled. With a relatively liberal atmosphere these days, its chances of survival are far better. That's the best news share markets have at present. And this feeling of optimism might just drive the BSE Index to the 2,000 mark by the end of 1991, as many in the market predict.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1991 HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 8.11.91	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	174.00	105.00	130.00	1.50 +
Associated Cement	3900.00	1300.00	3535.00	370.00 +
Asian Paints	325.00	215.00	307.50	48.75 +
Atlas Copco	118.75	42.00	102.50	7.50 +
Bajaj Auto	780.00	350.00	355.00	7.50 –
Baroda Rayon	1000.00	400.00	700.00	30.00 –
Bata India	125.00	72.00	125.00	27.00 +
Ballarpur	310.00	228.00	290.00	nil
Birla Jute	404.00	168.00	390.00	17.00 +
Blow Plast	210.00	40.00	107.50	7.50 +
Bombay Dyeing	375.00	150.00	355.00	10.00 +
Britannia Ind.	200.00	112.00	190.00	7.00 –
Brooke Bond	172.00	116.00	139.00	2.00 +
Cadbury India	200.00	132.50	181.25	5.00 +
Castrol India	540.00	162.50	518.75	58.75 +
Century Textiles	9050.00	3625.00	6910.00	1160.0 +
Colgate Palmolive	425.00	250.00	412.50	13.75 +
Cyanamid	182.50	76.25	162.50	nil
DCM	312.50	123.00	298.00	16.00 +
Dunlop	111.00	46.50	80.00	nil
E.I. Hotels	107.50	35.00	95.00	5.00 –
Escorts	172.00	127.00	162.00	5.50 +
Finolex Cables	400.00	140.00	286.00	22.50 +
Garware Nylon	44.00	27.00	35.00	2.00 +
G.E. Shipping	111.50	25.00	101.50	11.00 +
G.S.F.C.	340.00	150.00	332.50	67.50 +
Grasim Ind.	347.50	167.50	341.25	21.25 +
Guj. Ambuja Cement	317.50	90.00	285.00	12.50 +
Hind. Aluminium	367.50	200.00	305.00	7.50 –
Hind. Ciba	2100.00	650.00	1925.00	25.00 –
Hindustan Lever	180.00	132.50	145.00	1.25 –
Hindustan Motors	48.50	18.80	33.00	nil
Hoechst	4250.00	2400.00	3500.00	100.00
ICI	86.00	30.00	76.50	4.50 +
Indian Organic	80.00	30.00	56.50	1.00 –
Indian Rayon	269.00	104.50	247.00	12.50 +
Ingersoll-Rand	385.00	240.00	365.00	25.00 +
ITC	396.00	99.00	396.00	65.00 +
J.K. Synthetics	74.00	27.00	55.50	7.50 +
Kinetic Engineering	225.00	145.00	165.00	nil
Kirloskar Cummins	217.50	95.00	208.75	42.50 +
KSB Pumps	310.00	160.00	255.00	10.00 +
Larsen & Toubro	163.75	90.00	130.00	8.50 +
Lipton	187.50	57.50	180.00	22.50 +
LML Ltd.	42.50	21.00	30.00	1.00 –
M&M	115.00	57.50	82.50	10.00 +
Mastershares	42.50	20.00	26.50	1.50 +
Motor Industries	1900.00	675.00	1875.00	250.00 +
Mukand Ltd.	215.00	117.50	173.75	7.50 +
National Organic	1950.00	925.00	1540.00	140.00 +
Nestle India	201.00	111.25	198.00	13.00 +
Nirlon	41.25	16.00	26.00	4.00 +
Orkay Silk Mills	40.00	17.50	33.50	5.00 +
Peico Electronics	145.00	53.00	145.00	29.00 +
Premier Auto	69.00	30.00	49.50	nil
Raymond	212.50	110.00	189.00	10.00 +
Reckitt & Colman	375.00	205.00	253.00	6.00 +
Reliance Industries	206.00	91.25	167.50	9.00 +
Siemens India	255.00	112.50	235.00	30.00 +
Shaw Wallace	185.00	77.00	154.00	9.00 +
Shriram Fibres	79.00	33.00	70.00	6.00 +
SKF Bearings	3000.00	1650.00	2675.00	75.00 +
SPIC	104.00	33.00	99.50	21.50 +
Tata Steel	255.00	170.00	235.00	20.50 +
Telco	347.50	142.50	332.50	18.75 +
Titan Watches	105.00	58.00	100.00	8.50 +
Vam Organic	410.00	102.50	387.50	76.25 +
Videocon Int.	380.00	133.75	280.00	27.50 +
Voltas	145.00	92.50	127.50	7.50 +
Wimco	48.50	16.00	47.50	9.50 +

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	20.3646	20.1547
Austria	Shilling	100	225.4690	222.7100
Bahrain	Dinar	1	69.2598	67.3383
Bangladesh	Taka	100	71.3470	70.1764
Canada	Dollar	1	23.2702	23.0348
Denmark	Kroner	1	4.0913	4.0511
Egypt	Pound	1	8.0128	7.8151
France	Franc	1	4.7170	4.5977
Germany	DM	1	16.1031	15.6986
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	3.3539	3.3211
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.3192	1.2999
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	2.1259	2.0882
Japan	Yen	100	20.3666	19.8807
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.8995	0.8881
Kuwait	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Malaysia	Dollar	1	9.4973	9.4020
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.6317	1.6058
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6070	0.6056
Netherlands	Guilder	1	14.0850	13.9412
Pakistan	Rupee	1	1.0629	1.0420
Singapore	Dollar	1	15.4964	15.3374
Spain	Peseta	1	0.2520	0.2494
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.6190	0.6101
Sweden	Kroner	1	4.3525	4.3068
Switzerland	Franc	1	18.0594	17.8724
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1189	0.1126
Thailand	Baht	100	103.1353	100.1546
UK	Pound	1	45.9559	45.6204
USA	Dollar	1	26.0417	25.7898
UAE	Dirham	1	7.0929	7.0205
USSR	Rouble	1	29.9379	29.9356

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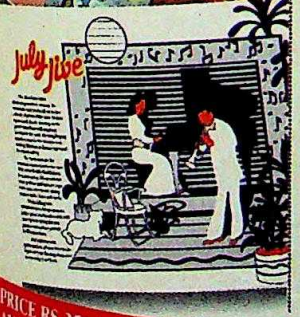

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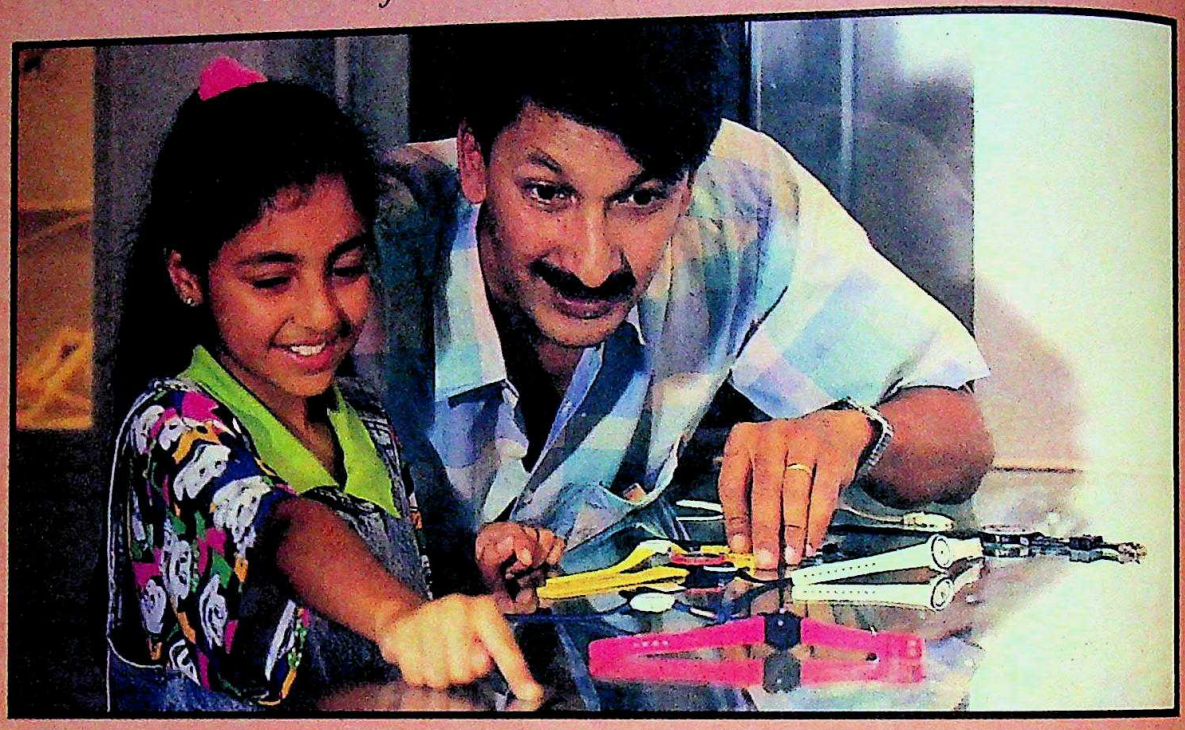

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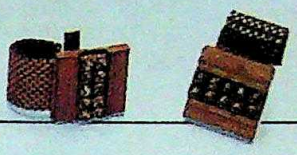

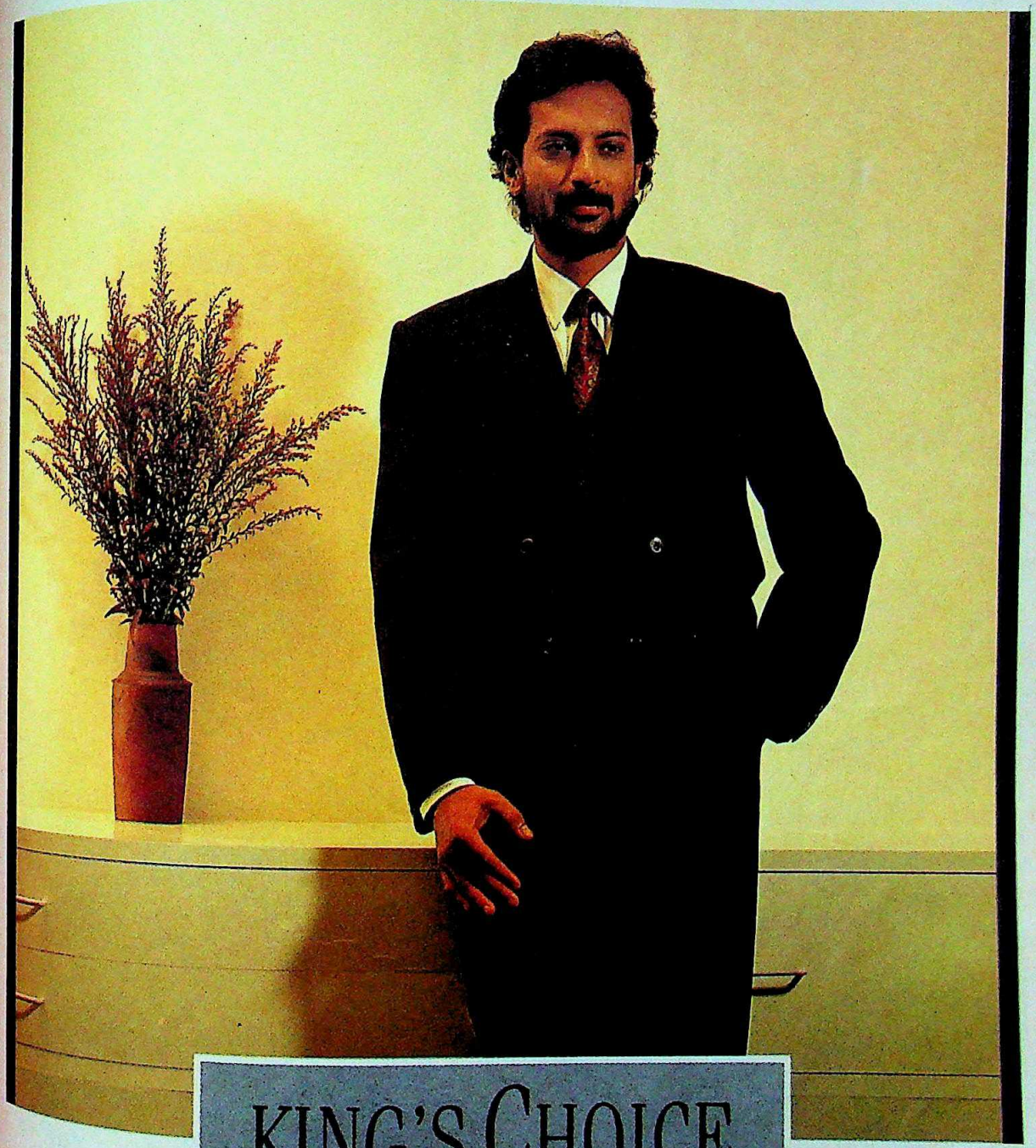

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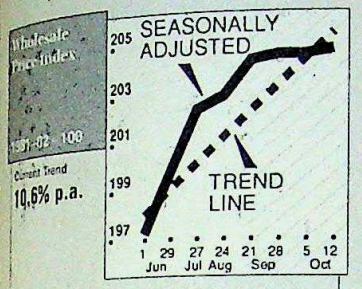
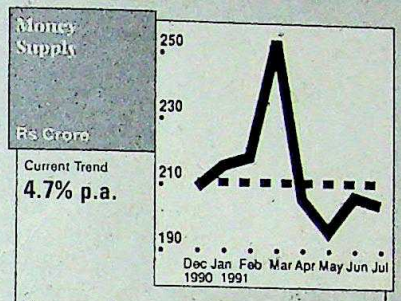
All indicators seem to suggest that the Government is confronted with the classic dilemma of dealing with stagflation. While a tight monetary policy has, to an extent, slowed the rate of inflation, it may portend deepening recession. The evidence: a negative trend in industrial growth.

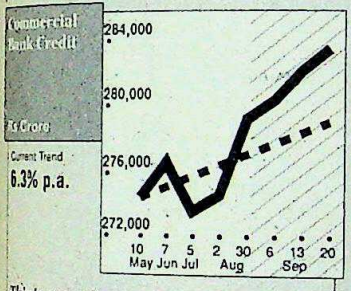
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



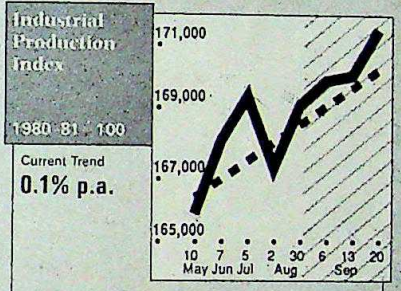
Wholesale prices were stable last fortnight—the tight monetary policy could be paying off.



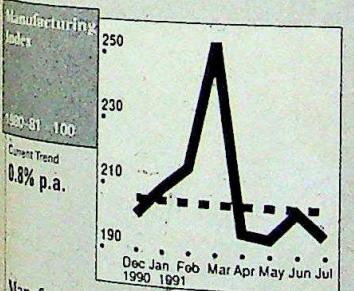
It grew—however, the overall stability during the last few months is slowly having an effect on inflation.



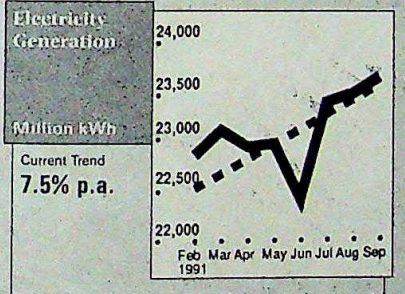
This is a constant worry—the marginal growth still isn't much help for the industrial sector.



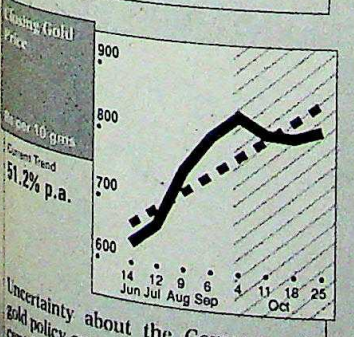
Overall growth is bound to suffer as a result of the current negative trend in industrial production.



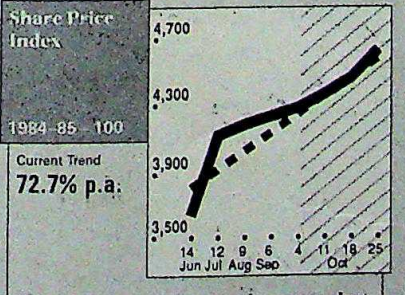
Manufacturing output also fell—serious measures are needed to pull industry out of a recession.



Electricity generation has increased slightly since July—but power alone won't stop industrial stagnation.



Uncertainty about the Government's gold policy caused prices to jump 6 per cent for the week ending October 25.



Share prices recovered somewhat, having dipped earlier in response to the high interest rate policy.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of October 1991

	% Growth
Fish	15.28
Oranges	14.44
Silk Raw	13.15
Tapioca	10.49
Bajra	9.51
Gingelly Seed	8.24
Groundnut Seeds	8.17
Rubber	7.67
Solvent Extracted Oil	7.55
Gingelly Oil	6.95
Turmeric	6.57
Iron Ore	6.50
Groundnut Oil	6.01
Dyeing Materials	5.56
Lubricating Oil	4.40
Buses	3.67
Boilers	3.66
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	3.61
Urad	3.54
Betel-Nuts	2.56
Steel Furniture	2.35
Sugar	2.21
Tobacco Raw	1.90
Bananas	1.76
Chillies	1.64
Vanaspati	1.54
Rice	1.42
Jowar	1.30
Maize	1.27
Furnace Oil	1.24
Moong	1.21
Mining Machinery	1.16
Electricity	1.12
Cotton Seeds	1.10
Diesel Oil	1.02
Machine Tools	0.92
Coal	0.90
PVC Compounds	0.86
Cigarettes	0.86
Aviation Spirit	0.86
Bolts & Nuts	0.80
Khandsari	0.80
Limestone	0.78
Petrol	0.78
Atta	0.77
Rails	0.75
Kerosene	0.73

Of the 134 series considered, 82 of them with a total weight of 51.877 had a positive rate of growth and 52 of them with a total weight of 32.975 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1991	1990
Letter of Intents		
Numbers, September	659	727
Industrial Licences		
Numbers, September	223	271
Petroleum Crude		
Thousand Tonnes, September	2032	2476
Petroleum Refinery Product		
Thousand Tonnes, September	4008	3635
Foreign Exchange Reserve		
Rs Crore, September	3730.68	4868.36

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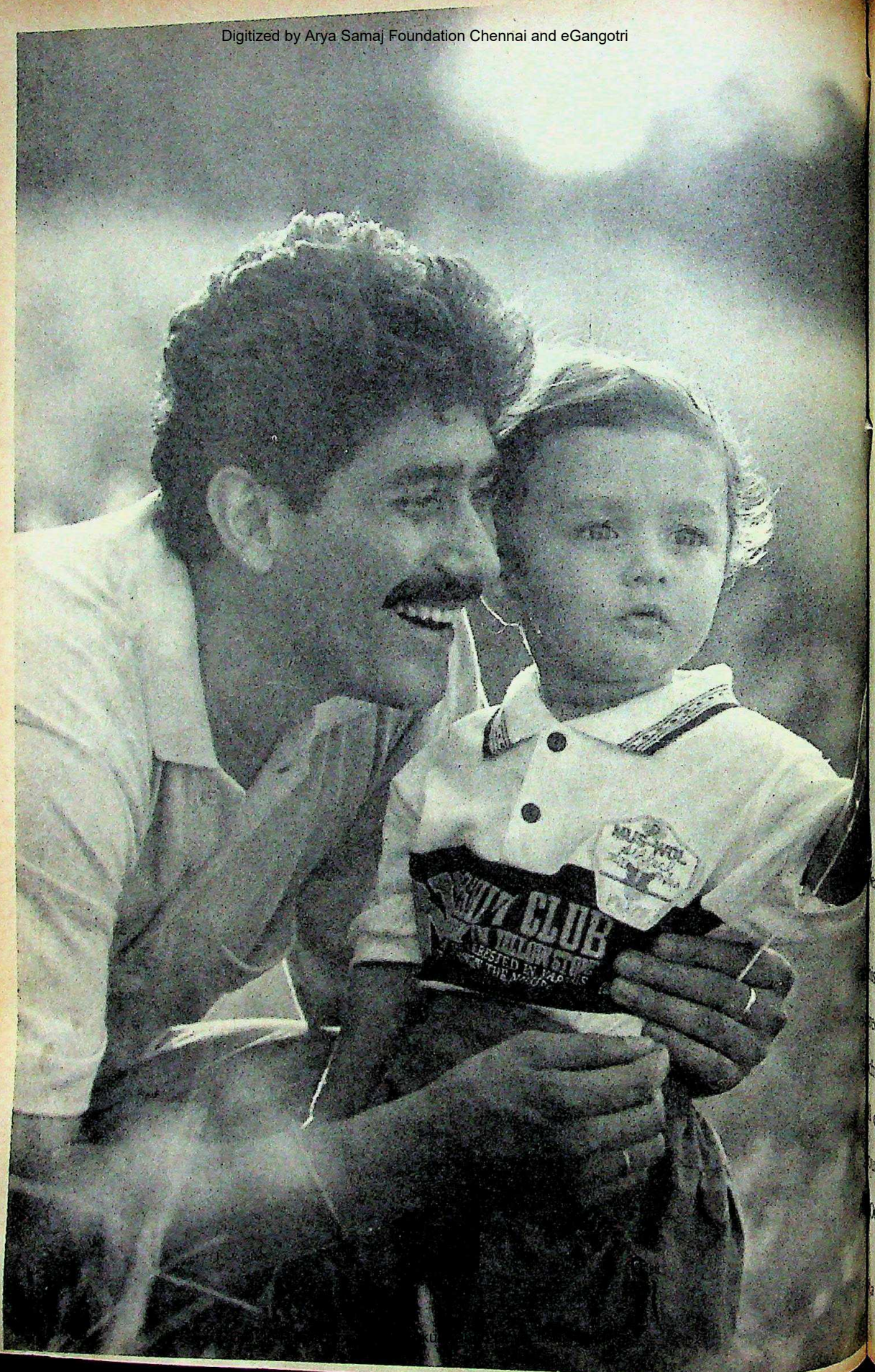

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SAARC

A Slippery Summit

The meet put off, India-bashing hits a new pitch

An aborted summit, another barrage of India-bashing, petulant accusations, and a regional grouping in temporary disarray. That was the message from Colombo where the flags limply lining the streets are a mocking reminder of just how perilous are the prospects for progress in the fledging South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Not that very much was expected from the annual gathering of the seven heads of state representing the organisation. Since its inception in December 1985, SAARC has resembled a group of incompatible porcupines attempting to assert their conjugal rights. The real gut-issues—trade, industry, energy, finance—have been nibbled at nervously while matters of minor import have dominated the agenda so far.

But equally, the advantages of regular summitry outdistance the diffidence and the differences; the opportunity for the leaders to meet face-to-face cannot be underestimated. Which is why Colombo's accusations that India deliberately sabotaged the summit seem an excessive indulgence.

The summit floundered on a technicality; the last minute pull-out by the king of Bhutan ostensibly due to unrest in the tiny Himalayan kingdom. Sri Lanka tried to get Bhutan to nominate a representative. India objected on the grounds that the summit required the presence of all the heads of state. Under the principle of unanimity which governs decisions taken by SAARC, there was no option but to cancel the show.

The view from Colombo, endorsed by Islamabad, is that King Jigme Singye Wangchuk's decision was part of some sinister plot hatched in New Delhi to embarrass Sri Lanka. They also point out that two previous summits were held in similar circumstances.

New Delhi brushes aside the allegations as having no validity. "We too had spent a lot of time and energy in preparing for the summit. The prime minister had even agreed to extend his stay at President Premadasa's request. SAARC is too important for us," says Minister of State for External Affairs Eduardo Faleiro, who was in Colombo when the summit collapsed.

India's version is that the precedents cited are not comparable. At Kathmandu, General Zia nominated prime minister Junejo. At Male, Premadasa sent the prime minister as his representative. Both were technically heads of government. In Bhutan's case, the King runs a one-man show. In fact, the next in line in protocol terms is the foreign minister. It would have been diplomatically unacceptable for him to endorse the final declaration on behalf of his king.

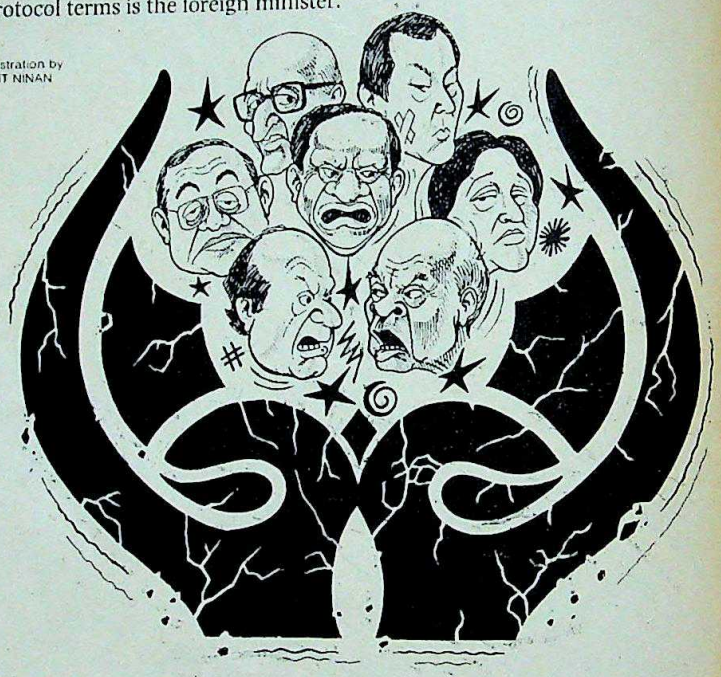
The other issue of controversy is whether or not New Delhi arm-twisted Thimphu. South Block, naturally, denies any such machination. It is also no exaggeration that Bhutan currently faces a serious extremist problem. Bhutanese diplomats have been distributing a bulky brochure on the extremist threat to the kingdom by settlers of Nepali origin listing specific cases of extremist activity in Bhutan.

What is equally undeniable is that New Delhi is not altogether unhappy with the turn of events. Premadasa's arrogance and frequent India-baiting has raised hackles in South Block. But it seems highly improbable that New Delhi would vent its displeasure by sabotaging an event as important as the SAARC summit. More so, with Mr Consensus, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, in the saddle. Being the dominant country among the seven, it has more to lose than any of the others. Certainly, there was a security threat in Colombo and Indian intelligence agencies had advised against making the trip. Rao overruled the objections—though his stay was cut short—and extensive security measures had been set in place by the Indian Government in preparation for his visit. To believe that New Delhi would go through such an elaborate charade merely to embarrass Premadasa smacks suspiciously of paranoia on Colombo's part.

The lessons are obvious: the flaws in the original charter need to be revised to ensure such diplomatic hitches are removed. More so, with a proposed new economic initiative on the anvil. That, after all, is the real challenge of SAARC—to use the experience of summits to iron out the wrinkles rather than let personality clashes derail the movement.

—DILIP BOBB

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



The Association has become hostage to personality differences and one-upmanship which has crippled progress in crucial areas.

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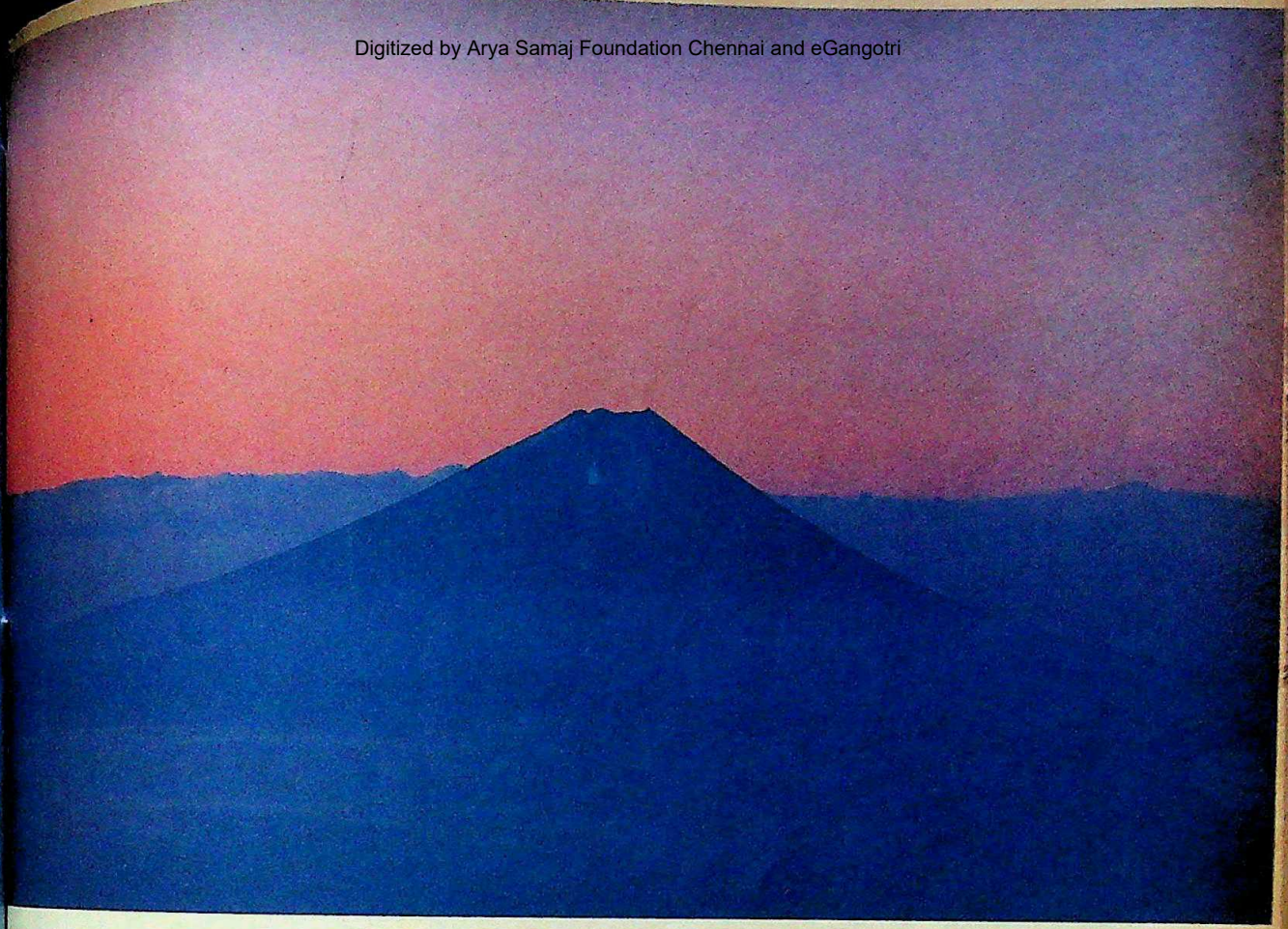

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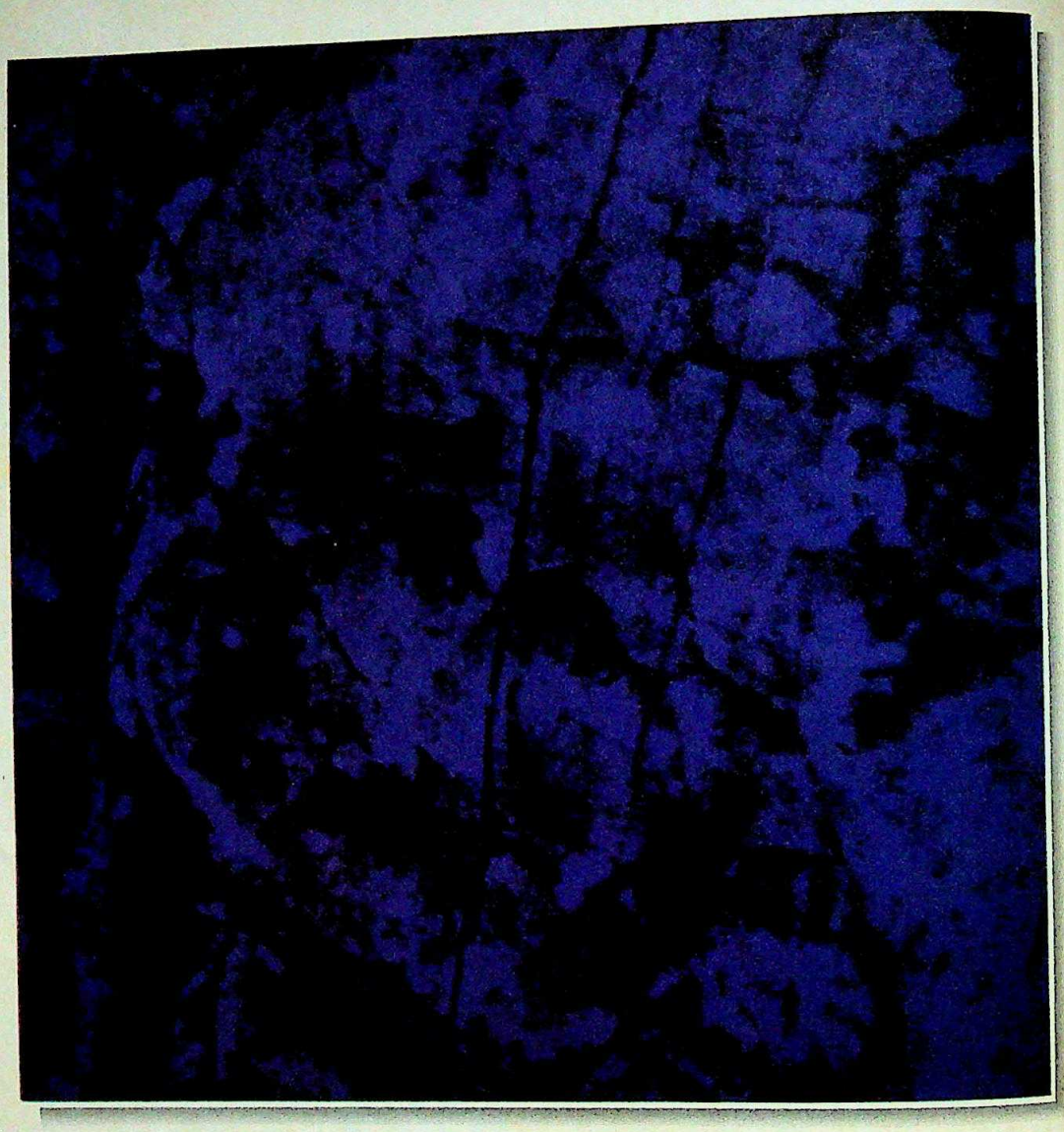

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Courting Catastrophe

I do not know who is calling the shots in Islamabad: the prime minister, the President, the army chief, or that grey eminence the Inter Services Intelligence. But the shots are being called recklessly. Direct assistance to the insurgents in Kashmir has increased and there appears to be total disregard of possible consequences of such action.

The de facto position of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent cannot be assumed to be one-sided; with Pakistan having weaponised and India not having done so. Are the Pakistani planners committing this cardinal error, and arrogantly stepping up their military assistance to the Kashmiri terrorists? Or are they calculating that notwithstanding a de facto mutual nuclear deterrent, India would not counter-attack Pakistan by conventional military means, fearing escalation into a nuclear exchange? This kind of assumption could lead to a nuclear exchange by miscalculation.

When a small nuclear power faces from another such a grave threat to its very existence, the fear of nuclear escalation will not prevent conventional military action. If a nuclear exchange does take place, India might suffer serious damage, but Pakistan will cease to exist. This is not being said in jingoism, but in all sadness. Decision-makers in Pakistan had better do their nuclear homework, and let some realism enter the equation.

Has Pakistan really thought her Kashmir policy through? Have her analyses covered the full spectrum of possible Indian responses, and arrived at the likely end-results in each case? I have serious doubts as to whether Pakistan has considered the impact on her polity of even the success of her endeavours in Kashmir. What appears a success in the short haul, need not be so in the long-term Pakistani interest. Espousing the Afghan insurgency has resulted in the spread of a drug and Kalashnikov culture in Pakistan. Propping up and supporting Kashmiri insurgency and dabbling in the Khalistani movement will very likely lead to the breakup of Pakistan.

Pakistan seems to think that India would not decide to pay her back in the same coin and foster and support dissidents in, say, Sind or Baluchistan. Or does she believe her own propaganda that India is already doing so, and therefore concluding that Pakistan can handle this danger? Surely her intelligence agencies know that there is no such serious Indian effort. India has behaved with restraint thus far. But Pakistan cannot assume that India will continue to hold back in spite of the excesses.

It would be interesting to analyse one possible unforeseen hypothesis. Let's assume that India has concluded that she cannot, for whatever reason, counter-attack Pakistan conventionally in response to what she is doing in Kashmir. Also, that a continued law and order approach will not succeed. Finally, that a political solution of offering greater autonomy to the state in a truly federal India would be completely unacceptable to the people of Kashmir at this late stage.

Propping up Kashmiri insurgency and dabbling in the Khalistani movement will very likely lead to the breakup of Pakistan, if India retaliates with a real effort to subvert Baluchistan and Sind.

If these assumptions are correct, further analysis would indicate that continuing with the law and order approach would increasingly strengthen pro-Pakistan terrorist groups and weaken pro-independence insurgents. It would also convert the uncommitted to an anti-India stance. Why should India play Pakistan's game? Suppose India not only accepts the independence of Kashmir, but also actively sponsors it with the state going back to its original composition, with Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit and Baltistan. It will not be without the people's support. Pro-independence feelings in Kashmir are much stronger. If the borders of the new state are guaranteed by the UN, the big powers, China and India, it would be difficult for Pakistan to do a 'Saddam Hussain' on it. The creation of such an independent state would mean that Pakistan has no physical link with China. The geopolitical and strategic consequences for Pakistan would be grave. The 'success' of Pakistan's efforts in Jammu & Kashmir are predicated both, on these assumptions being correct, and on India following a law and order approach in an unwinnable situation.

A similar exercise can be carried out in the hypothetical event of the birth of Khalistan. Its religious capital might well be Amritsar, but its political capital is before long bound to be the Lahore of Ranjit Singh! If Pakistan carries on somewhat heedlessly with its present policies, the results could be at the minimum a breakup into its component parts; at the maximum, the disappearance of Pakistan as we know it consequent on a nuclear first strike by Pakistan against India and India's response.

Much of this strategic muddle-headedness is due to the lack of doctrine and dialogue on the consequences of both India and Pakistan being small nuclear powers. Clarity will come only after the issues are brought out into the open, and dialogue commences between China, India and Pakistan, with the big powers acting as honest brokers. Non-proliferation in South Asia might have been a possibility before 1974; it is a will-o-the-wisp in 1991, with both India and Pakistan perceived to be in possession of weapon-grade material and weapons.

One hopes that Pakistan thinks things through and adopts a wise approach to the Kashmir and Khalistan problems in its own self-interest. Along with praying for wisdom to dawn, we cannot but keep our powder dry. ■

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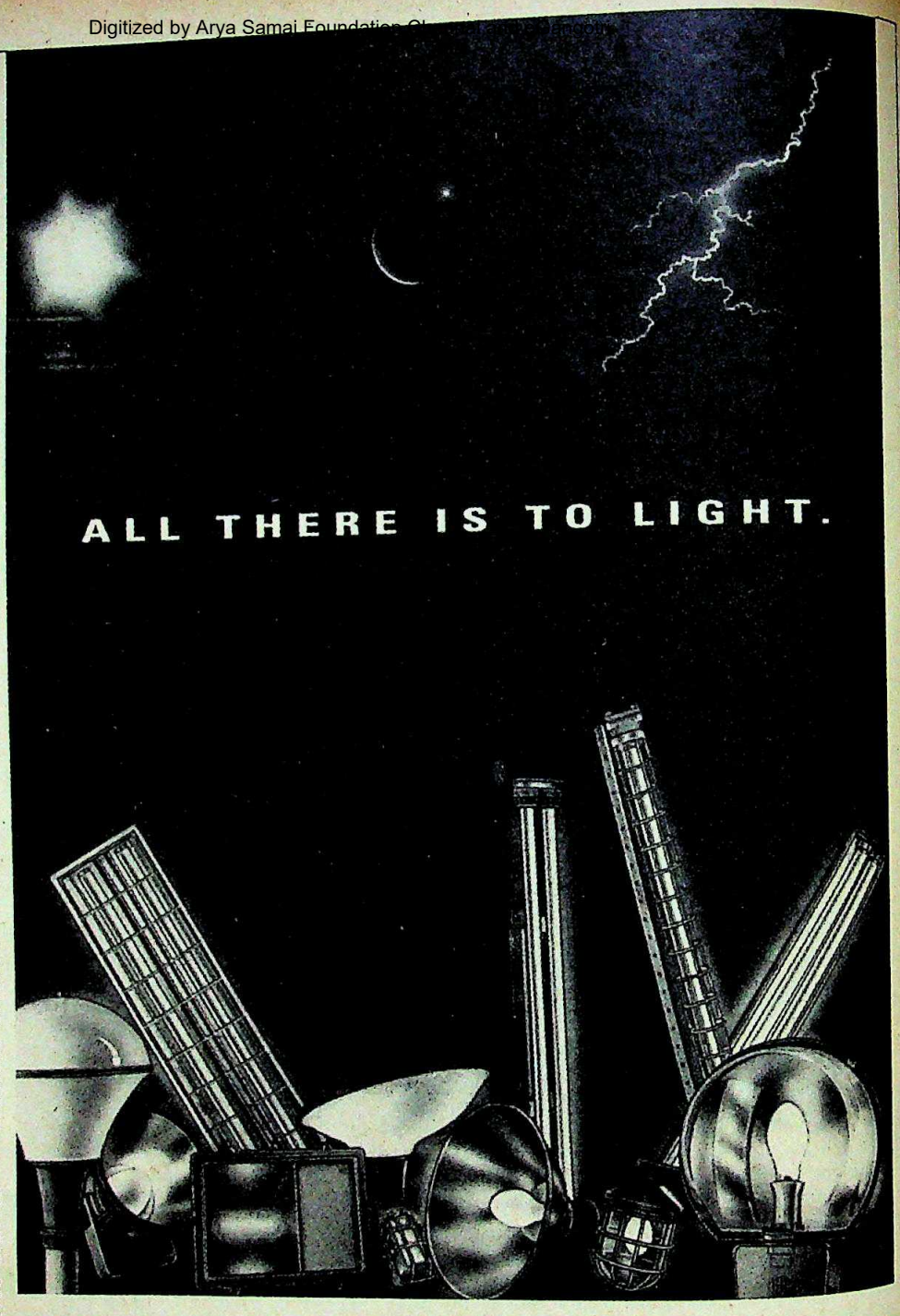

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THE INDIAN ARMY

Restoring Parity

Discontent causes scrapping of promotion policy

THE brave new system was flawed from its birth. It sifted major-generals and those ranked above into two streams. The elite 'command and staff', who would get the plum field posts, and the more modest 'staff only' stream. It led to widespread heartburn and discontent. And a disciplinary problem for the army.

Now in a landmark reversal, the army is getting ready to scrap the five-year-old 'streaming policy'. "It is being replaced by a straightforward evaluation of senior officers' capabilities—qualifications and performance—by a peer group," said army chief General S.F. Rodrigues, in an exclusive interview to INDIA TODAY.

The policy was framed to ensure adequately long tenures in critical command positions, but it backfired.

General Rodrigues' move comes as no surprise for he never favoured the system. The brainchild of General K.V. Krishna Rao, it was honed during General A.S. Vaidya's tenure, and announced by General K. Sundarji. The intention behind creating the 'command' category for brigadiers and higher ranks was to ensure adequately long tenures in critical command positions. They were not only given precedence over their staff stream colleagues in promotions, but they also retired a year later than them.

But it proved to be a case of the remedy being worse than the disease. Posts to accommodate those with the extra 'pip' on their shoulders had to be identified. Predictably, many of those passed over made statutory and non-statutory representations against their pigeon-holing. In fact, over the past two years, in a significant departure from established Indian Army practice, at least six officers—major generals or of a higher rank—have gone to civil courts against early retirement or denial of promotion. Although the courts upheld the system, the point was driven home that the policy was backfiring.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

General Rodrigues: successful move

It wasn't even suited to the Indian Army. As a recently-retired army commander observes: "The criterion for selection in our army is command. It became extremely difficult to say someone was better suited for the command and staff stream and others for just staff jobs." The result: a bulk of staff positions in top echelons are now manned by people without the necessary field experience. And senior line commanders lack higher administration experience.

Picking holes in the system, General Rodrigues asks: "If we feel that an officer can contribute to this organisation in a certain rank—in the staff stream—why are we penalising him again by cutting short his service? And making him junior to those cleared for the other stream?"

He also dubs the system an anachronism. In the past, contenders for the top post, such as Lt-General S.K. Sinha, resigned in a blaze of publicity after being superseded. But usually they turned in their uniforms quietly. Lately, those feeling piqued or wronged have been less restrained.

Discussing the reasons for such 'aberrations', General Rodrigues says: "In the old days, officers contested and resigned. Because they came from a certain background, had sufficient private income, and believed in honour and integrity. Now they come from the middle class. Which means they have got little to fall back on."

The erosion of the value of money has also changed attitudes. As the army chief says: "You'll see my people turned out very nicely. But their collars and cuffs will be frayed and their shoes will be scuffed because they simply haven't got the money. So the retiring officer says let me go and have a shot at it—in the courts. I might just be able to get one more year."

Yet, jettisoning the system—proposed during General V.N. Sharma's tenure—has taken a while. The fall-out on the force will take time to evaluate. The army is more concerned about the implications on discipline. Which is why the Judge Advocate General, Major-General A.C. Mangala, approached the Supreme Court for speedy disposal of armymen's cases five months ago. The apex court, in turn, duly directed all the high courts. Hopefully, the army's move to scrap the system will reduce discontent within its top brass and pre-empt further litigation.

—ARUN CHACKO

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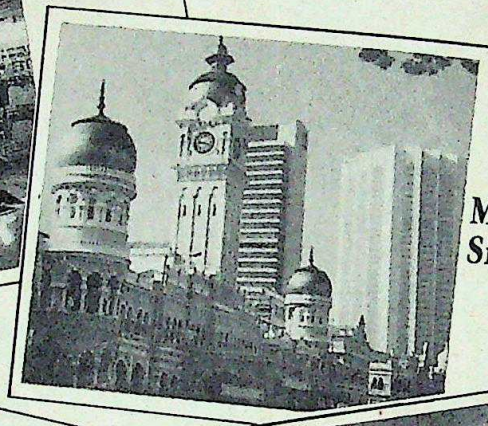

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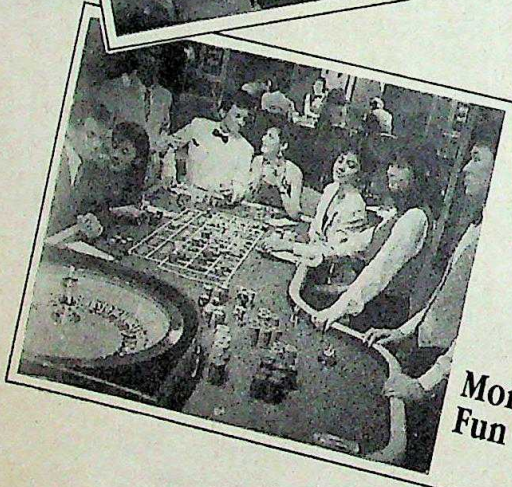

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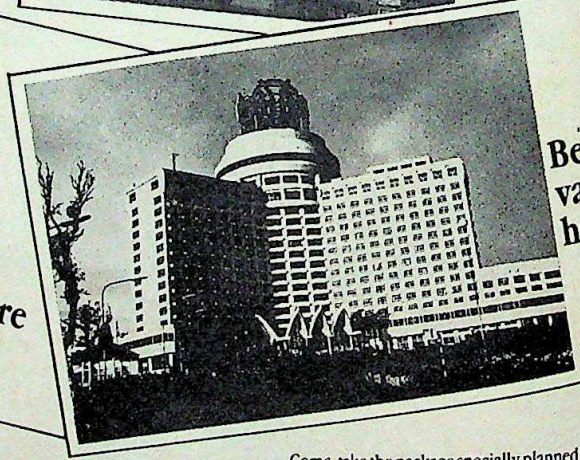

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HARIJAN THANAS

Paper Privileges

Laloo's boast of special facilities is an empty one

LAST month in New Delhi, Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav grandly announced the decline and fall of atrocities on Harijans in Bihar. If he takes time off from self-congratulation, he can drive around the state to see how contrary reality is.

When he comes to the crime-ridden town of Gaya, a faded signboard, tucked away behind a heap of motor parts and covered in dust, will be the only pointer to the existence of a Harijan thana. One of the prime showpieces in Laloo Yadav's my-heart-bleeds-for-the-poor government, Rampur thana, is just another police station. If ever any facilities existed for Harijans, they have now been relegated to a cupboard. The officer-in-charge is under suspension. And this thana serves not just Gaya district but also Aurangabad and Nawadah.

The entire area is notorious for its offences against Harijans. It should be flooded with complaints. But it isn't. Last year, there were 11 complaints. This year, there have been two. The situation in Tehta, in Jehanabad district, is no better. Last fortnight, outside the local police station bearing the legend—Harijan police outpost—some Harijan women pleaded with the constables to register a case. It was not done.

What Vaishali District Magistrate Ramjit Prasad found when he visited the Harijan-Adivasi thana at Hajipur was much worse. The police station has jurisdiction over nine districts. But it doesn't show. Most of it has been converted into residential quarters for the staff, complete with kitchens. There is neither any telephone nor a vehicle.

Conceptualised 14 years ago, after a spate of crimes against Scheduled Castes, the 11 thanas now exist only on the paper that Laloo Prasad reads his speeches from. The thanas were meant to monitor the situation and move in first gear when a complaint was registered. Like in many similar dream machines, the engine never came to life. Says Krishnadeo Yadav, president of the Indian People's Front (IPF): "The thanas are just an eyewash."

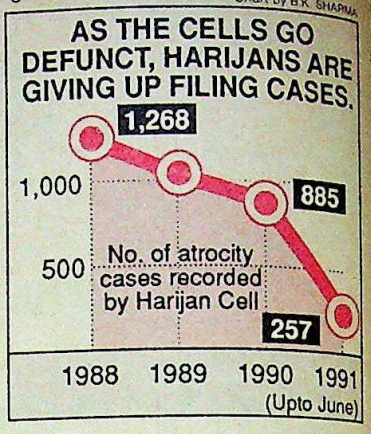
Krishnadeo Yadav's statistics are more startling. He says that since Laloo Yadav became chief minister, 25 massacres have occurred, in which no fewer than 100 Harijans and 65 other Scheduled Castes were killed. What is worse, says he, many of those allegedly involved in the crimes—Satyendra Singh, Bindu Singh, Ramadhir Singh, Jwala Singh and Vidya Kuer—are still free citizens. To top it all, Ramlakhan Singh Yadav, whom the IPF has accused of having formed the Kisan Sangh which is believed to have engineered the Tishkora massacre, was embraced by the Janata Dal.

Little wonder then that sources in the police headquarters describe these special thanas as nothing more than post offices. These thanas are empowered to register all cases of atrocities against Harijans, recommend action against the culprits and forward the case to higher authorities as 'special reports'. But it doesn't seem to have made a difference to the lives of those it has been designed for.

But Laloo Yadav's Government is still convinced of the efficacy of the thanas—so much so, that it plans to set up 14 more. They will be supported by special courts in all districts for speedy disposal of cases. According to DIG (Harijan Cell) Waris Hayat Khan, his office reviews the situation at the state level every month, earmarks vulnerable areas, and initiates checks. But inquiries reveal that the thanas are so defunct that Harijans do not even register cases any more. Laloo Yadav will need more than figures to bolster his scheme.

—FARZAND AHMED

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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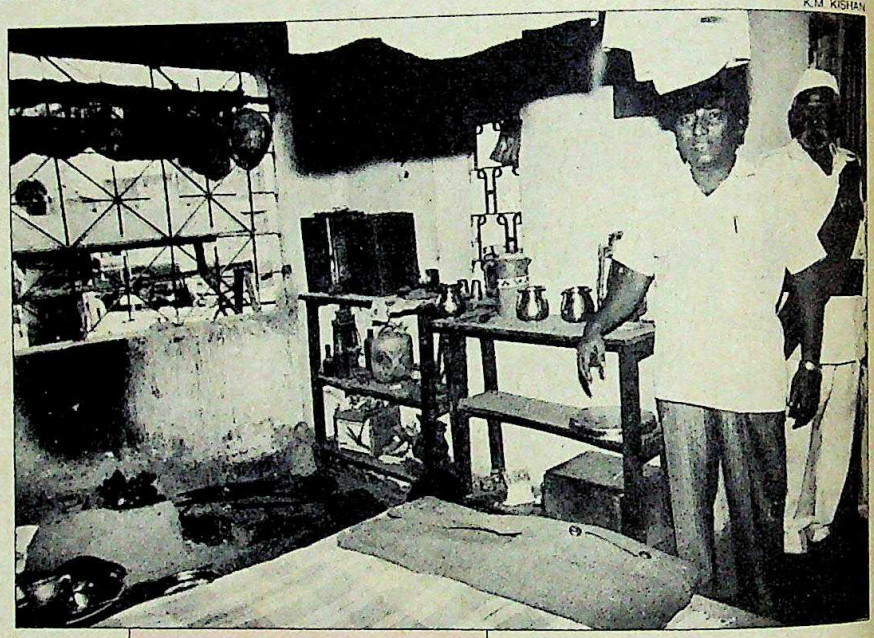

Prasad inside a thana used as a kitchen

Created to protect Harijans, the thanas today are no more than post offices.

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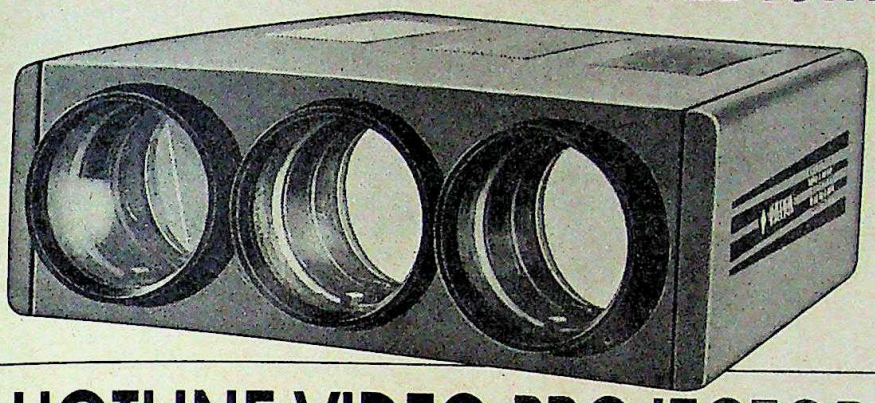

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DAINIK BHASKAR

Double Trouble

Two dailies bear same name as father and son feud

THE stakes are high in this fratricidal drama. Chock-a-block with emotional outbursts, pathos, court cases, and politically motivated shenanigans, it features a father and son who have been crossing swords for the past seven years to gain control of *Dainik Bhaskar*, Madhya Pradesh's largest and most influential Hindi newspaper chain headquartered in Gwalior. The recent episode ended in the legally untenable situation of two dailies with the same masthead being published from Gwalior.

This followed the Press and Registration Appellate Board last month giving the paper's title to its founder, Dwarka Prasad Agrawal, 68. But as his only son, Ramesh Chandra Agrawal, 46, who has had physical control of the business, obtained a court stay, Dwarka Prasad started publishing the second *Bhaskar*. Says he: "We started the paper after the administration failed to act on the board's judgement and stop publication of the *Bhaskar* illegally published by my son."

All the administration has done is to lodge a complaint with the police regarding the two *Bhaskars* that even carry the same registration number and the name of the same publishing company. The police is now looking into this violation of the Press and Books Registration Act, 1867.

At the crux of the family feud is the inheritance claim to the media empire—six editions, 2 lakh circulation—by Ramesh Chandra's stepsisters: Hemlata, 25, and Anuradha, 22, both unmarried. Dwarka Prasad had married twice and insists that his two daughters from the second wife be given their due share. But Ramesh Chandra contends that his stepsisters have no rights in the private limited company that controls the newspaper.

As the father is crippled from a stroke, Hemlata is standing proxy for him in the battle. That means contesting dozens of cases—civil, criminal and under the Companies Act—and more than a hundred cases filed for alleged contempt of various court orders. The two sides also wash their dirty linen in public and call each other names. Which makes the father lament: "Maybe I have to suffer such humiliation at the hands of my own son due to my sins in previous lives." Hemlata too broke down at a press conference in Bhopal: "My brother has left his father. If I too desert him, who will look after him?"

The two parties also accuse each other of misusing political influence. Both have a lot of clout being associated with the fastest growing newspaper chain in central India. Ramesh Chandra has veered to the ruling BJP after being close to the Congress(I). That's why, his father alleges, the administration is favouring him.

However, in the past, Dwarka Prasad had himself sought political intervention. He tried to enlist the support of the then chief minister, Moitlal Vora, to oust his son, but Vora's sympathies were with the son. However, Arjun Singh, who took over in 1988, had been willing to take his side.

Arjun Singh's dislike for Ramesh Chandra wasn't surprising. *Bhaskar* had carried on a concerted campaign against him when he was away from the state, shoring up his opponents—Vora, Madhavrao Scindia—in the factional feud in the state Congress(I).

Using the ruse of a likely breach of peace arising from any fall-out of the family fracas, the police in a midnight knock on April 17, 1988, threw out all the employees from the Gwalior office and sealed the building. The next day, the daily's property was attached.

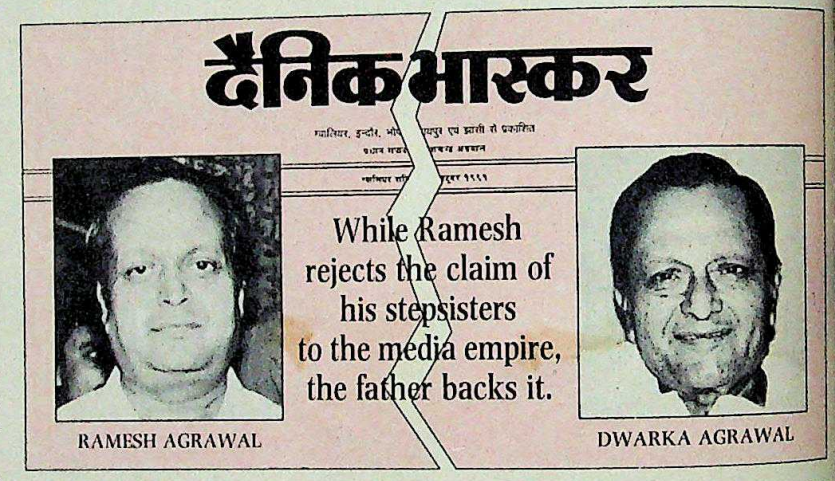
Consequently, the Gwalior edition did not come out for several days until Ramesh Chandra started using the printing facilities of the edition in Jhansi, 120 km away. He eventually regained control of the press and office premises through the courts.

Now he is livid to see a *Bhaskar* clone. "They are doing it to erode our goodwill," he fumes. And points out that the penalty for publishing a "duplicate" paper—a fine of Rs 2,000 or six months in jail—is too soft. Meanwhile, he has obtained an order from the Gwalior district court prohibiting a local press from printing copies of the other *Bhaskar*. And to carry the battle to the rival camp, next month he is planning to launch a rival to the Jabalpur edition of *Bhaskar*. Controlled by his uncle, B.D. Agrawal, who in the family feud has sided with his brother and accused his nephew of usurping the entire publishing empire. Says he: "I was thrown out when the newspaper business became profitable."

Financially, the stand-off is proving prohibitive for both parties. The original *Bhaskar* had to increase the number of pages from eight to 12 to "distinguish itself from the counterfeit newspaper". And the new-comer, failing to attract any advertisements, costs Dwarka Prasad Rs 4,000 a day even though it runs on a skeleton staff and prints only 1,000 copies.

Nor is *Bhaskar* the first paper to be so divided. Another Madhya Pradesh paper which split earlier this year was *Nai Duniya*, with one partner retaining the Indore edition and the other publishing *Dainik Nai Duniya* from Bhopal. Clearly, most paper wars in the state are battles within. For the Agrawals, at least, the tussle threatens to be long, bitter and costly.

—N.K. SINGH



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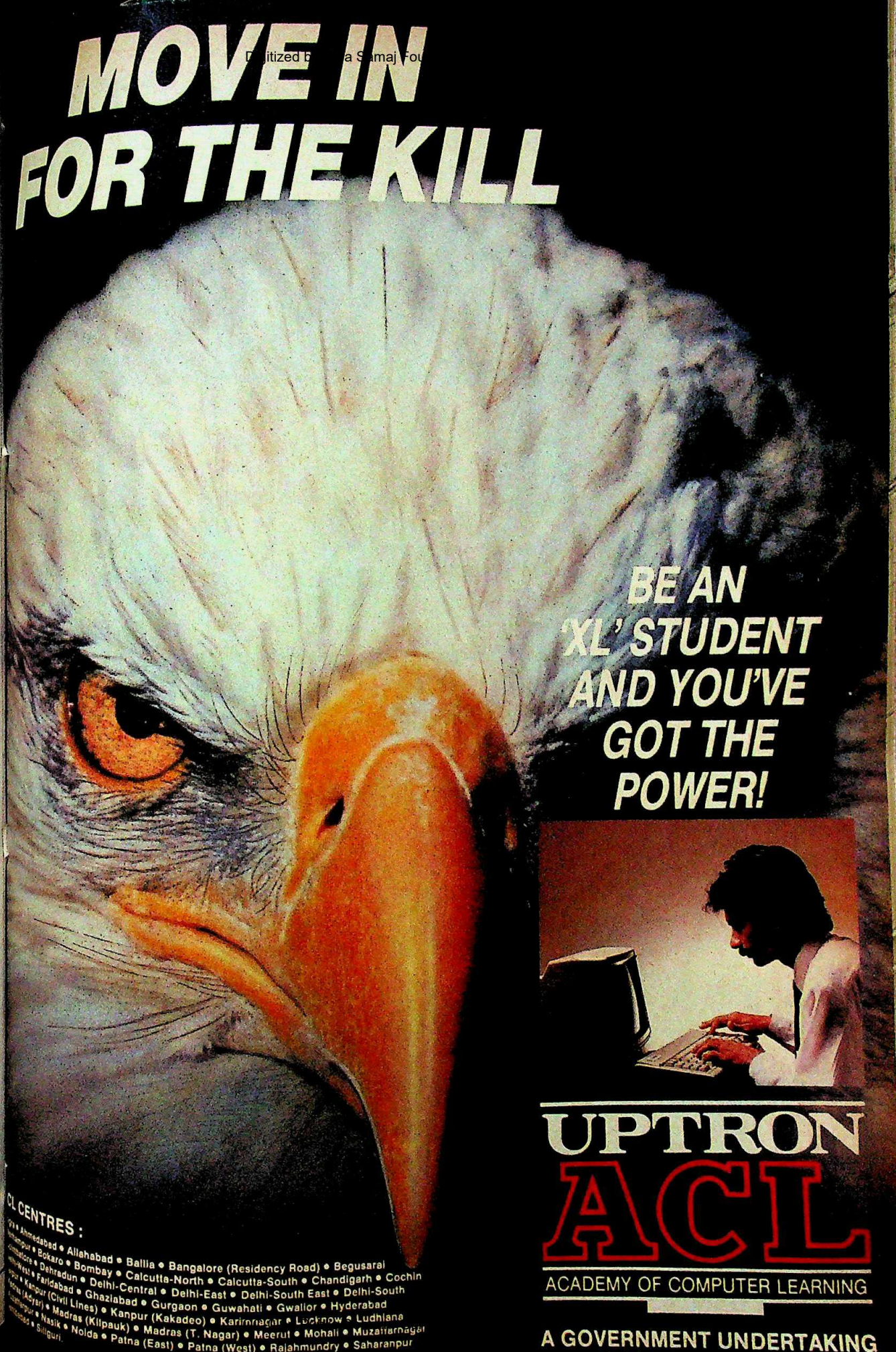

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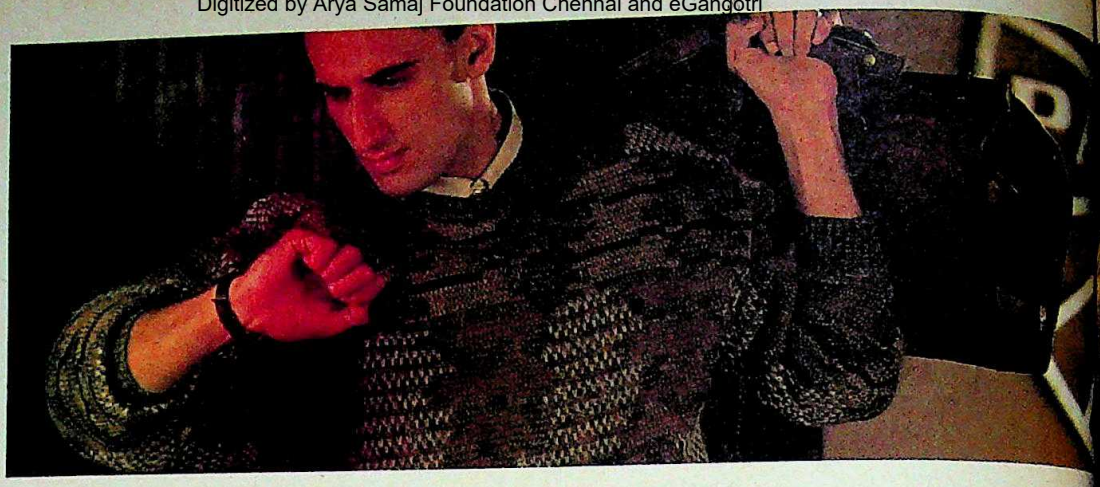

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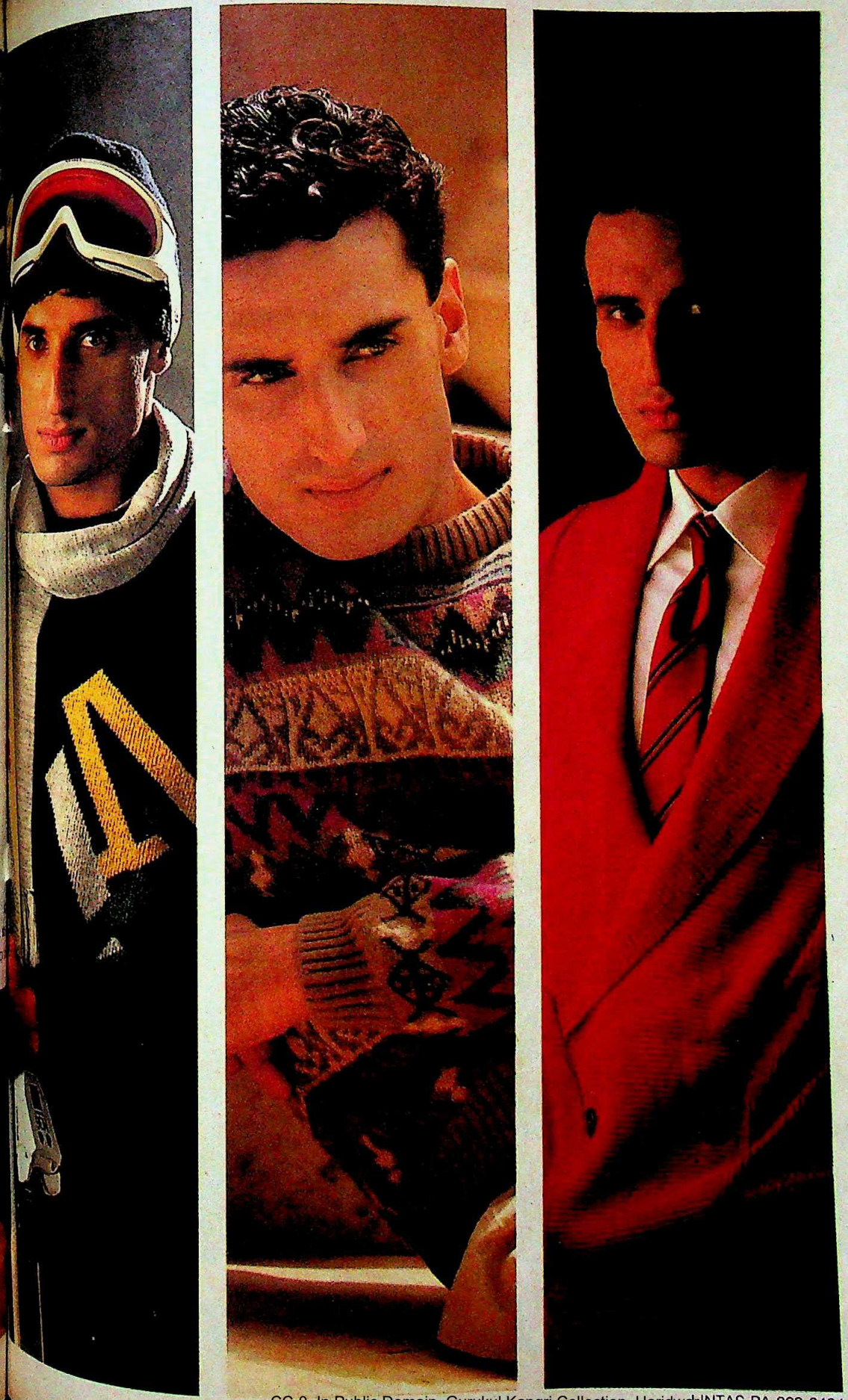

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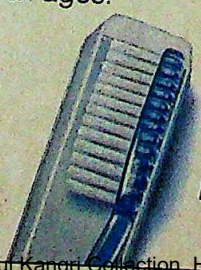

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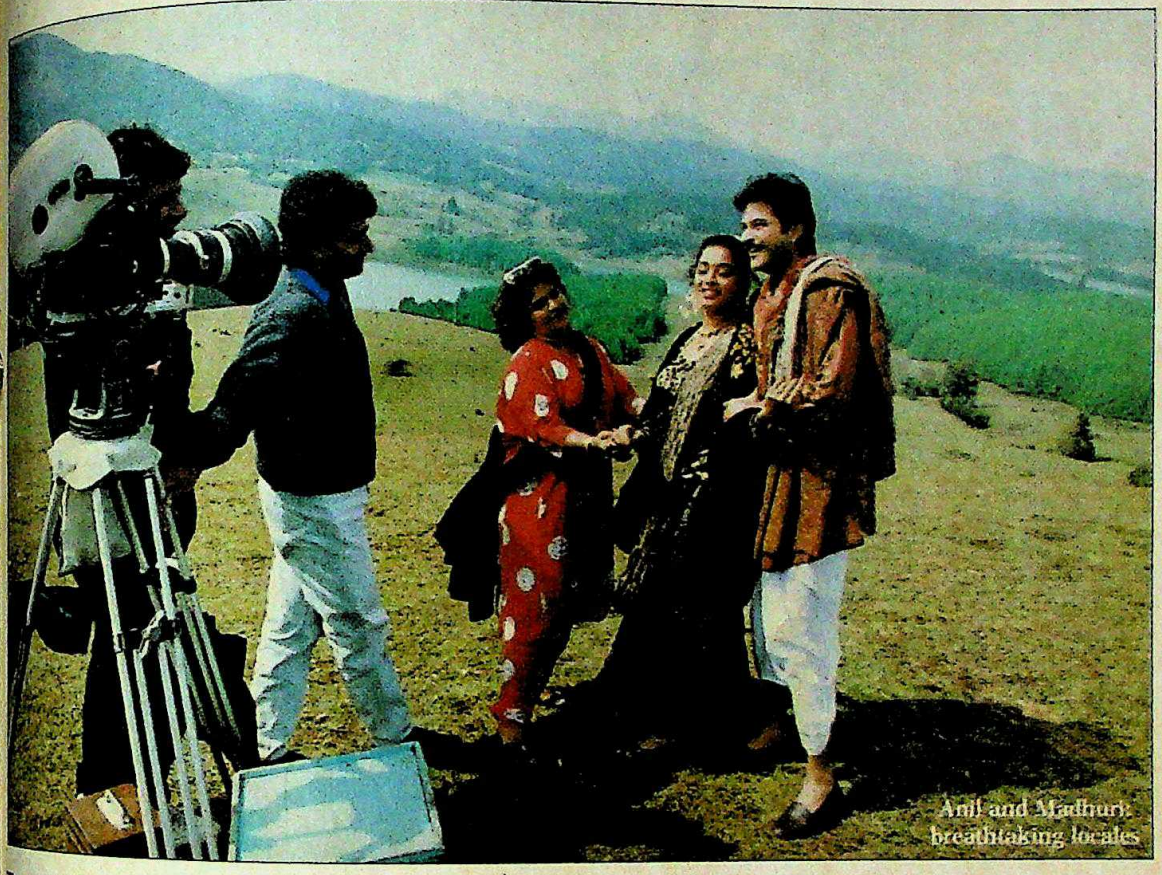
OOTY

Celluloid Charms

Film makers throng the hill town, exploiting its many resources



Anil and Madhuri: breathtaking locales

MOVE over Bollywood. There's competition to Film City. Ooty—the queen of the Nilgiris—has become filmdom's new Mecca. And with Hindi film makers now shifting locale from Bombay to Ooty, this colonial hill-resort is slowly beginning to resemble the backyard of a film studio.

The boom started early this year, with producers, directors, actors and entire film units heading for the blue-misted hills. While south Indian directors have been shooting in Ooty for years, Bombay movie moghuls have discovered this film paradise only now. Ooty residents list with pride the latest Hindi hits filmed on their turf: *Hum, Dil, Aashiqui, Dil Hai Ke Manta Nahin, Saajan*. Says actress Madhuri Dixit: "About 95 per cent of my films have been shot in Ooty. The place is being exploited to the hilt."

Inevitable, given the vast advantages the place has: direct access from Bombay, cheap accommodation and

> "I am as obsessed with Ooty as a dog is with a bone. I don't want to unshackle myself from there."
>
> MAHESH BHATT
> *Film Director*

cheap labour, good weather and proximity to the southern film centres of Madras and Bangalore which provide equipment and junior artistes.

More significantly, with Kashmir and the hill regions of Uttar Pradesh out of bounds due to increased terrorist activity, Ooty is proving the ideal alternative. Says Lalit Kapoor, who is shooting *Deewana*, a Rishi Kapoor-starrer, in Ooty: "I would have liked Shimla but because of the situation, I opted for Ooty." He isn't the only one. Subhash Ghai, who has shot a number of his hit films like *Karz, Hero*, and *Ram Lakhan* in Ooty, says: "So what if it is a compromise for Kashmir, and every second film is shot there? Ooty is still the best."

And it's not just the breath-taking locales, but the magnificent colonial

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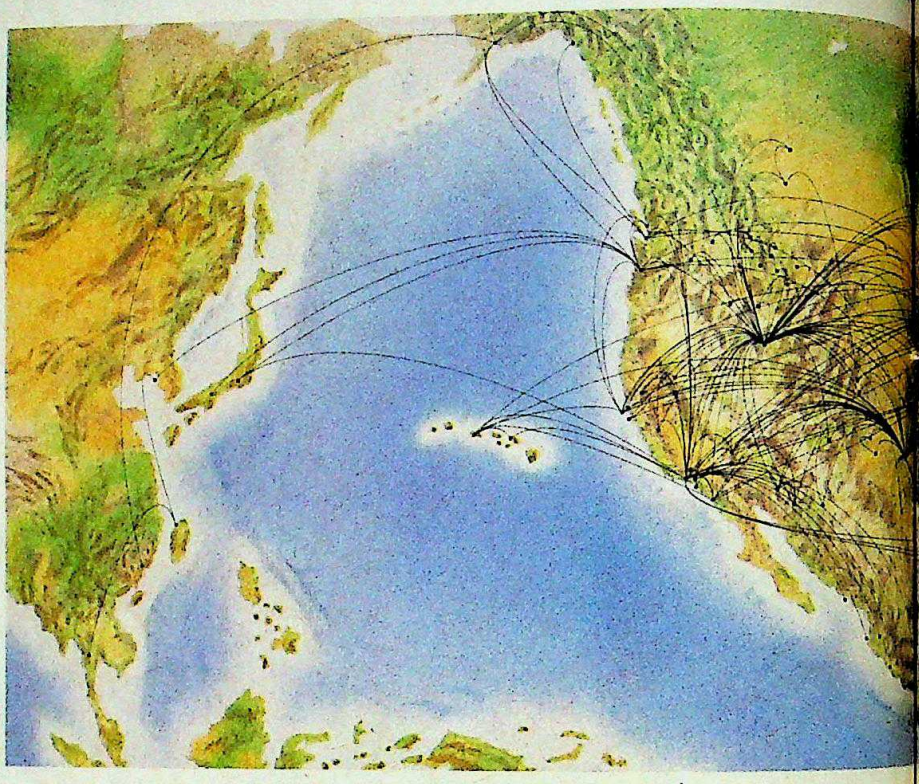
Welcome to the world D



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A still from Lalit Kapoor's *Deewana*

buildings too. In *Hum*, some of the most beautiful scenes were shot in the bungalows and lodges that are a legacy of the British Raj. Fernhill Palace, now converted into a hotel owned by the Taj group, the Tamil Nadu Government's Tamizhagam guest-house, and private bungalows like the century-old Batliboi House are making their debut in Hindi films. Says C.J. Rodrigues, the caretaker of Batliboi House: "Shooting goes on here for about 10 days a month." But the peak season is between September and January when there are no rains to disrupt shooting and no tourist rush.

For Ooty entrepreneurs, this is a chance they're not missing. A whole support industry has mushroomed. New hotels are coming up and shops supplying generators and film equipment are doing brisk business. In fact, since the influx of film people, prices have shot up. Everything from labour to cab hire has doubled over the last three years. Says M. Thirumurthy, a resident: "Living in Ooty is an expensive proposition these days."

Enterprising liaison men like A. Jagannathan too are encashing the resort's popularity. He caters to every need of the film crew: from transport, air and railway reservations, to equipment and hotel bookings. He even scouts for locations in the interior forests with directors. Says he: "I do this kind of work twice or thrice a month."

> "So what if Ooty is a compromise for Kashmir? It's still one of the best."
>
> SUBHASH GHAI
> *Film Director*

But there are some who are sentimental about the place. Like actor Mithun Chakraborty and director Mahesh Bhatt. Says Bhatt, who has recently shot *Aashiqui* and *Dil Hai ke Manta Nahin* in Ooty: "I am as obsessed with it as a dog is with a bone. I don't want to unshackle myself from the place." Mithun has even set up a hotel in neighbouring Conoor to accommodate the film industry rush. And next year, he plans to open a luxury hotel in Ooty itself.

Many come merely to unwind. Says B.C. Kumar, lobby manager of the Savoy hotel: "Amitabh Bachchan usually stays at the hotel's Rose Cottage and spends time away from the crowds and holiday makers." Actors Rishi Kapoor and Anil Kapoor stay at the more modest Southern Star and like to work out at the health club or play snooker. Keeping celebrity tastes in mind, hotels are planning to expand recreational facilities and culinary fare. Mithun Chakraborty too plans to have squash courts, discos, water massage parlours and speciality restaurants.

The flip side is that rapid commercialisation will mar the hill town's unspoilt beauty. But till that happens, film makers and harried film stars are making the most of it. Says a contented Madhuri Dixit: "Ooty is heaven." At least for now.

—SARITHA RAI

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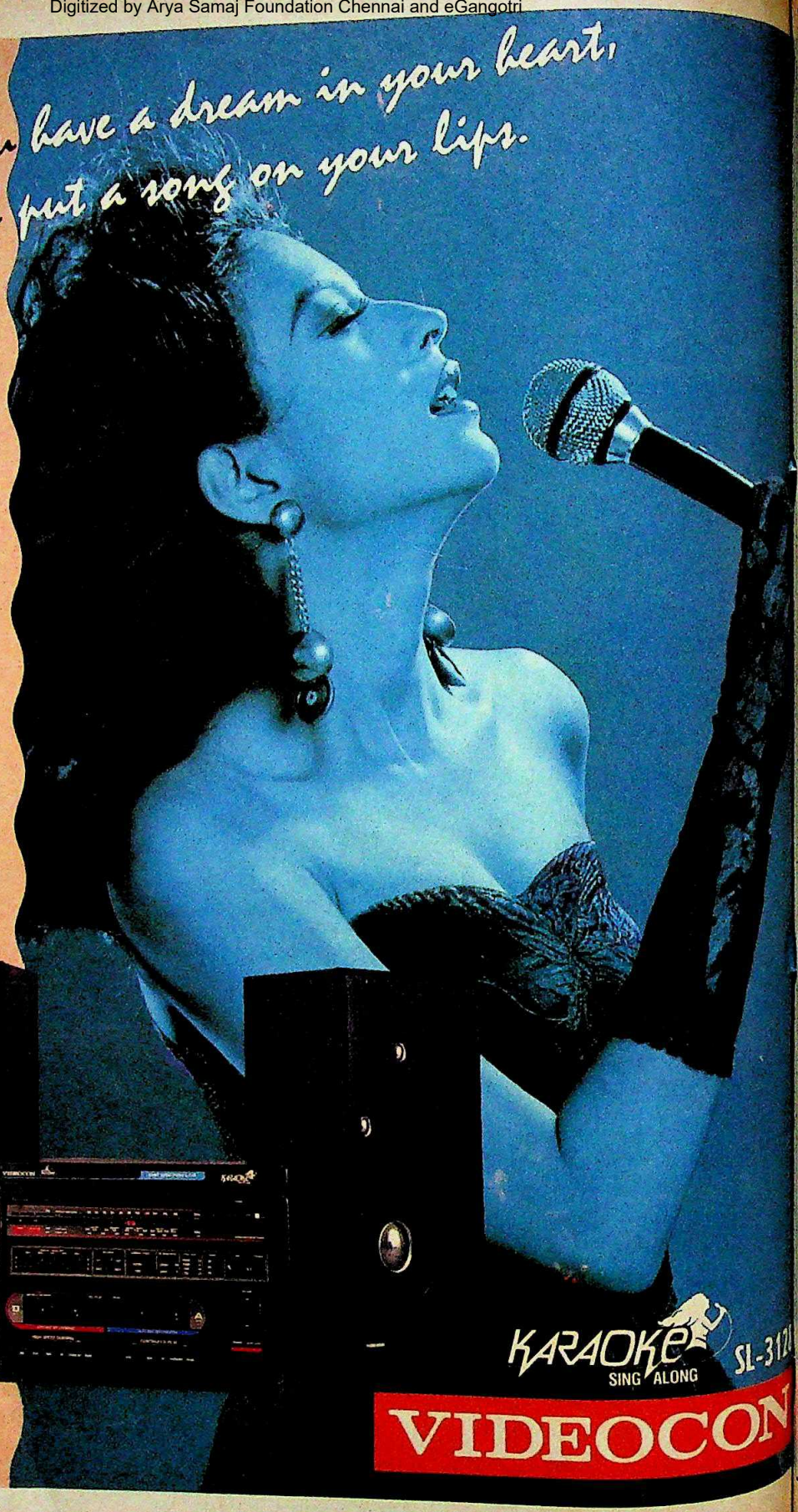

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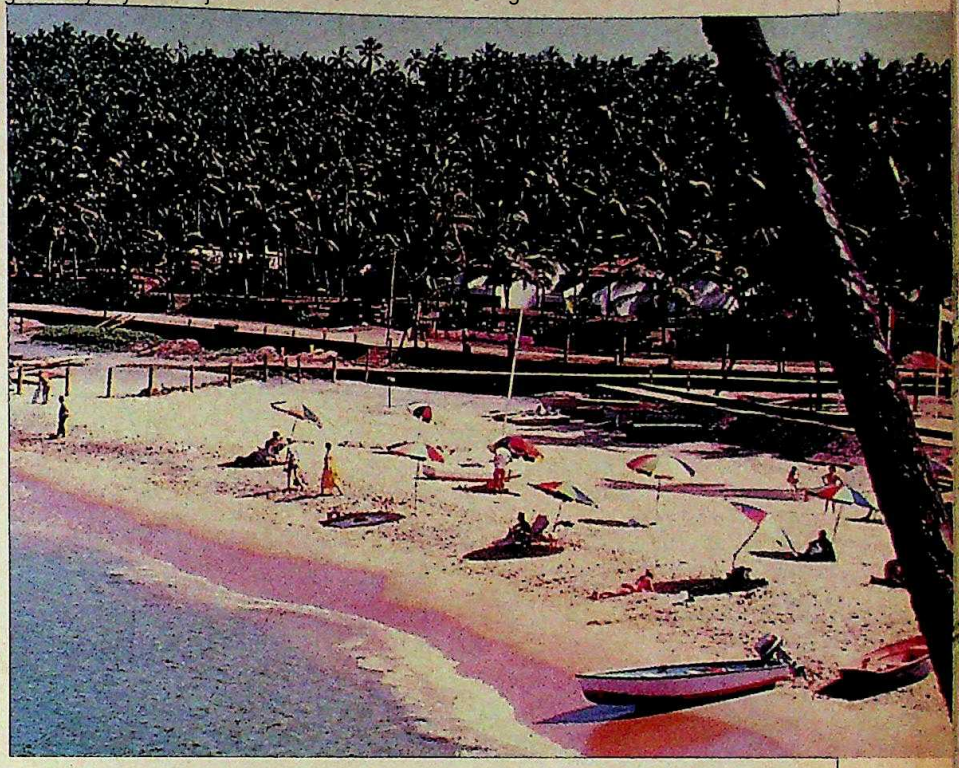
VISIT INDIA '91

Big Plans Backfire

A steep fall in foreign tourists belies the promised revolution



Kovalam beach: deserted despite the blitz

IT was to be the year of great beginnings. The launch of a revolution in tourism that would, by the end of the decade, make India one of the major destinations in the global travel circuit.

Normally languid Tourism Ministry officials turned hyper-active. Old plans to boost tourism were dusted and discussed afresh. Crores were spent on pre-publicity that stamped 1991 as Visit India Year. Colourful pamphlets were printed exhorting foreign tourists to journey to the usual resorts like Goa, Kerala and Orissa. And even some unusual ones. Such as Ahmedabad, to watch a festival of kites, which a flyer promised to be of "amazing diversity—mythical snakes, dragons, eagles, national flags, all lurching up and around to festoon the sky".

Yet, as the year sped by, a vital ingredient was missing—the promised surge in tourist arrivals. Instead, 1991 is expected to go down as the year when the number of foreign travellers visiting India experienced its steepest decline in decades. Conservative estimates put the drop at anything between 10 per cent and 12.5 per cent. That totes up to something like 1.3 lakh fewer foreigners visiting India than last year. And a whopping 4.4 lakh short of the target of 1.6 million tourists by the year end (*see chart*).

Bad news began pouring in right from the beginning of the year. January and February saw an average 30-per cent drop from the normal. By March even the Khajuraho festival, which usually draws large flocks of foreigners, looked deserted with tour operators reporting a 25-per cent drop in bookings. That negative trend persisted till last month.

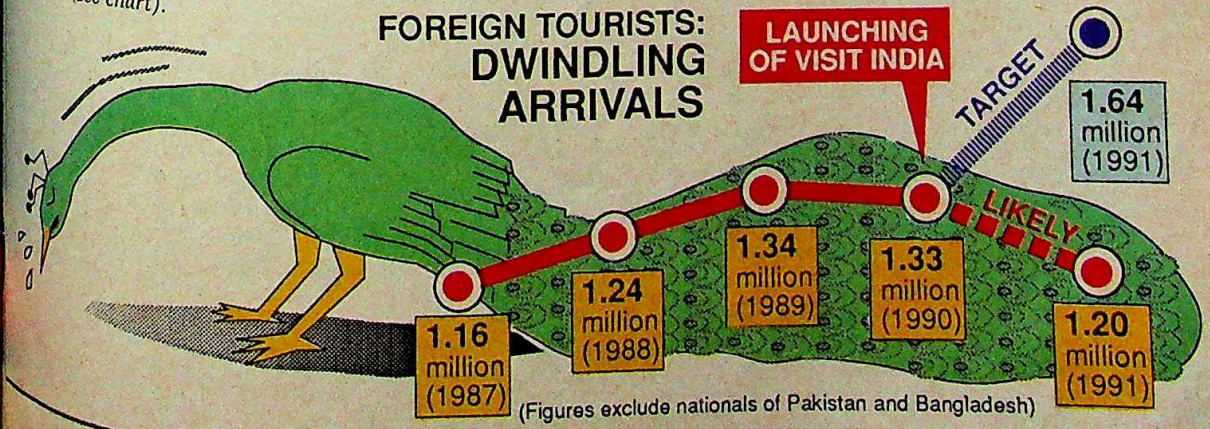
Tourism officials, however, maintain that things are not as bad as they seem. In New Delhi, Yogesh Chandra, the bespectacled director-general of tourism, says: "Yes, the opening months were bad but ever since then bookings have been picking up. And for all those who say that tourism is on the decline, bookings for the Pushkar mela in November were closed months in advance."

But that seems to be a flash in the otherwise badly burnt pan. While November and December, the peak foreign tourist months, are likely to push up arrivals, the travel industry has already dismissed 1991 as a bad dream. O.P. Ahuja, president, Indian Association of Tour Operators, says: "Even if the decline finally evens out to around 10 per cent, it's the worst we have seen in decades."

True, the slump is not entirely Pariyavaran Bhavan's fault. The Gulf war and subsequent recessionary trends in the US and Europe have seen growth rates in world tourism slow up to around 3.6 per cent last year. That affected traffic to India last year itself. And its hang-over is being felt in 1991 as well.

Another major cause is the nega-

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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tive image India is sending out because of its internal political turmoil. The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the Ayodhya and Mandal agitations, and the Kashmir and Punjab crises have all worked to discourage tourism. Many travel agents abroad have, in fact, classified India as an unsafe place to visit, and this has had its impact. But as Gautam Khanna, vice-president, Oberoi group, points out: "Our publicity should have countered such an image. But our overseas marketing was weak and lacked a professional set-up."

Contributing as much to the decline is the haphazard way the Tourism Ministry has gone about trying to implement its plans. Part of the problem is that its plans had to pass through three successive governments. The Congress(I) government in May '89 declared 1991 as the Visit India Year. But fell soon after and the V.P. Singh government took over only to be replaced by the short-lived Chandra Shekhar ministry which was more keen on its own survival than promoting tourism. And the new Government is only now getting down to business. Rabindra Seth, consultant Welcomgroup of hotels, points out: "The mistake was that we gave ourselves only 18 months to plan for this year, when other countries prepare at least three to five years in advance."

That India is the loser is clear from the performance of countries like Sri Lanka and Nepal. Tourism there has seen an average growth of 8 to 20 per cent in the past year, despite troubled conditions in both these countries. And in the Far East, Indonesia, that launched a concerted drive to promote tourism three years ago, reported a 30 per cent growth last year. Says Ahuja: "It just shows what a country can do with aggressive marketing." India's share in the world tourism trade is a dismal 0.31 per cent. And the hike in visa tariffs is a further deterant.

Just how lackadaisical India has been about tourism is clear from the way the ministry has functioned so far. A major plan for the Visit India Year was to shift the emphasis away from the traditional Golden Triangle of Delhi-Agra-Jaipur and develop newer circuits that would include adventure and wildlife tourism.

However, apart from such grandiose plans, nothing was done on the ground. Fumes Inder Sharma, chairman of Sita Travels and president-elect of the Pacific Asia Travel Association: "Instead of all these master plans, if we'd developed just one circuit at a time, today we would have had 40 circuits to operate along."

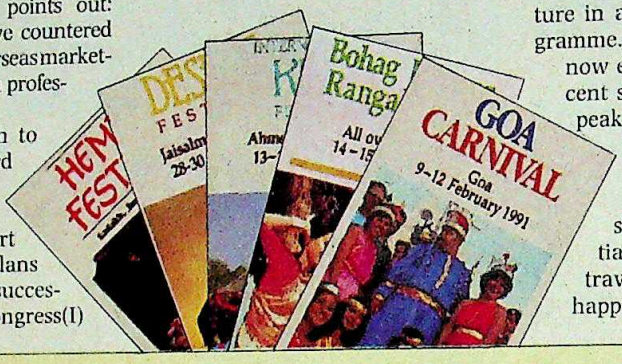
Domestic travel too is a major bottleneck that is yet to be addressed. Getting flight bookings is still a hassle. And surface transport is as bad. The country has only 200 air-conditioned coaches, whereas smaller nations like Thailand have 800.

Nor was any major thrust given to expanding the woefully inadequate accommodation facilities—a key feature in any tourism promotion programme. The availability of rooms is now estimated to be about 20 per cent short of the demand, during peak season. Moreover, given the foreign exchange crunch and India's new open-door economic policy, there should have been a major initiative to attract the business traveller. Nothing of the kind is happening. The overall problem seems to be, as Kanti Poddar, managing director of the Delhi-based Orient Express, a large travel agency, says: "Tourism has always remained fun and games and the Government has always attached low priority to it."

But now the panic button seems to have been pressed. In the past couple of months, the Government has stepped up its efforts to correct some of the drawbacks. Around Rs 42 crore have been disbursed to states to develop 18 new circuits and promote 46 fairs and festivals. And in a bid to salvage the Visit India Year, it is now being extended to March.

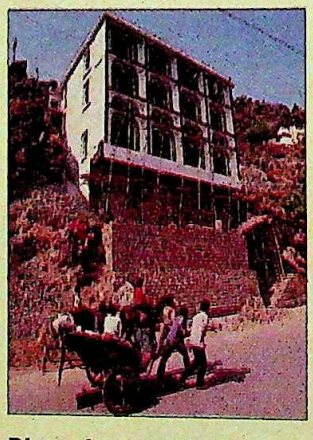
Meanwhile, the ministry is chalking out a comprehensive tourism policy that would include setting up "special tourism areas" similar to export processing zones. This would allow the domestic travel industry both facilities and the flexibility to boost tourism. But the proof of all these efforts will be in the policy's implementation.

—SHEFALI BHIMAL

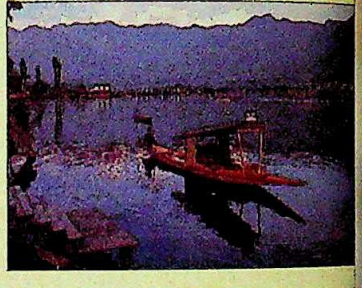


What Went Wrong

No major shift in emphasis from the holiday-maker to business traffic.



Plans for new hotels, and better air and road travel facilities did not materialise.



Publicity unable to counter India's negative image of a troubled nation.

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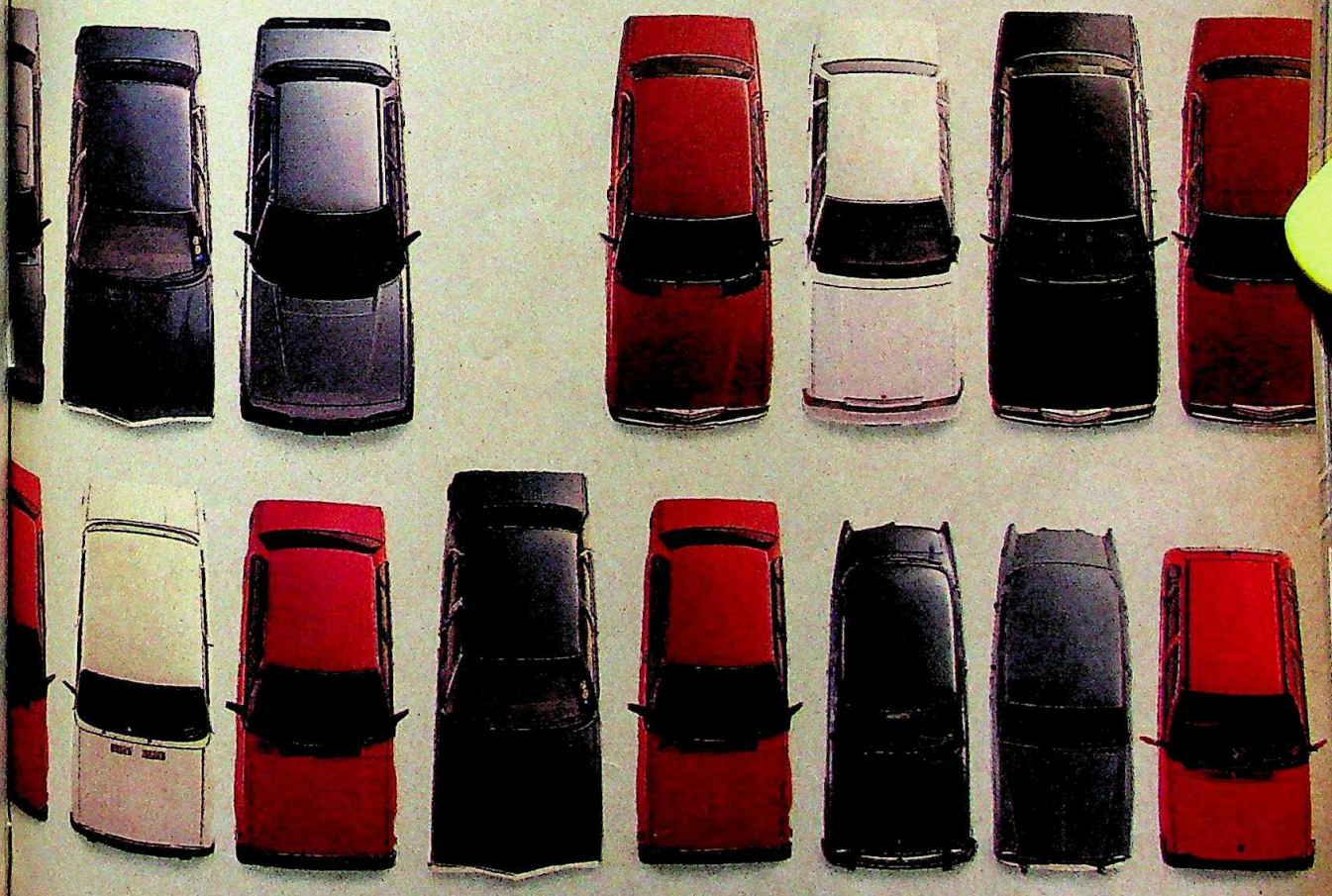

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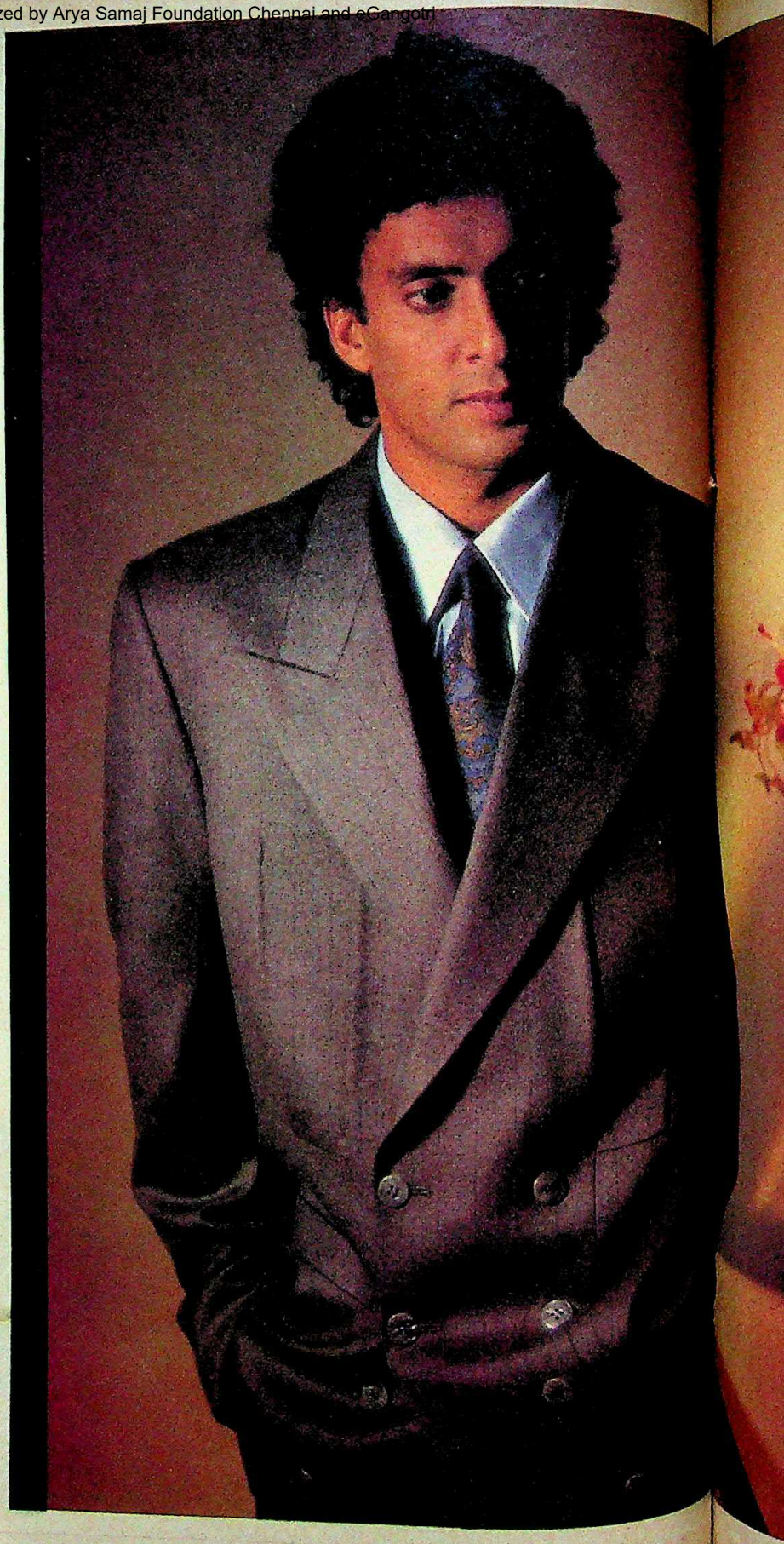

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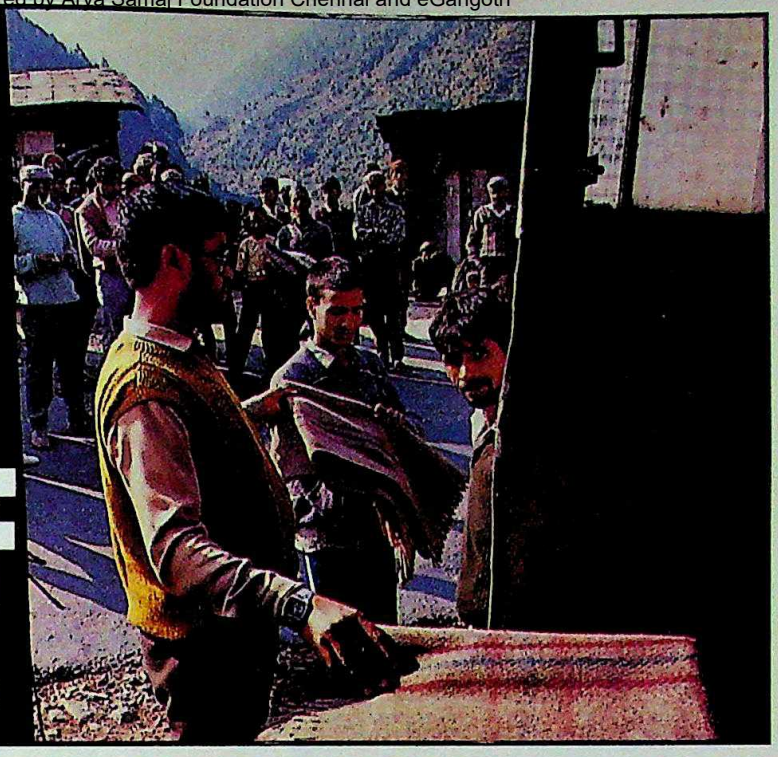
UTTARKASHI

THE RELIEF RIP-OFF

People are on the brink of survival as succour is hijacked



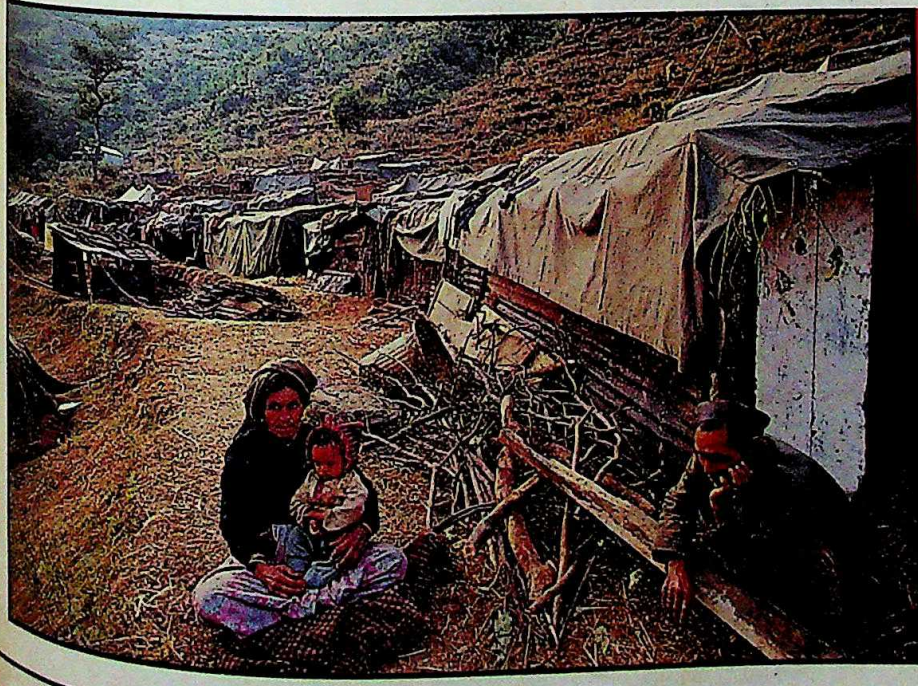
Text: RAHUL PATHAK; Photographs: PRASHANT PANJIAR

IF death is a cliche in the quake-hit Uttarkashi district, then relief is a cruel joke. There is evidence of government largesse all over: outside the collectorate, inside hundreds of official trucks and outside the houses of sundry village pradhans. However, even in the midst of plenty, a kind of Darwinism prevails. The worst affected are unable to grab their share and suffer on the verge of survival.

Even a month after disaster struck Uttarkashi, the people are still to see the back of despair. Many of the survivors have become totally fatalistic. Like Bachan Das, 36, from Bharkot. Says he: *"Jo mar gaye, woh kismat wale the. Hum kiske liye jeeyen aur kaise jeeyen."* (Those who perished were the lucky ones. Who do we live for? And how?) For hundreds like him, half-heartedly picking at the strands of a snapped existence, the harsh winter ahead may only prolong the agony.

Worse, relief operations have been reduced to a mockery. Says Chipko leader Sunderlal Bahuguna: The people don't want to listen to AIR, or see another helicopter." The reason: AIR, he says, is exaggerating the extent of relief operations. And the helicopters are only for effect.

Bahuguna isn't entirely accurate. For AIR is not lying, it is merely concealing a part of the truth. Certainly, the relief effort is mammoth. Additional District Magistrate U.D. Choube rattles off the figures. Countless bags of wheat and



HIRA SINGH, 60, of Aungi, a village of shepherds and cattle-rearers.

"We may survive the cold. But, our cattle and children certainly won't be able to."

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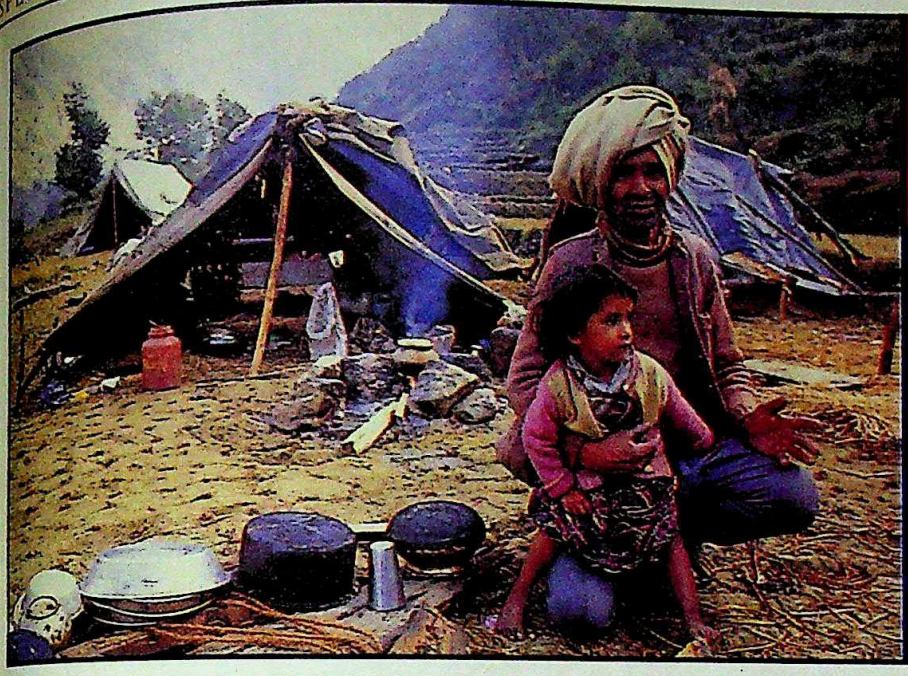
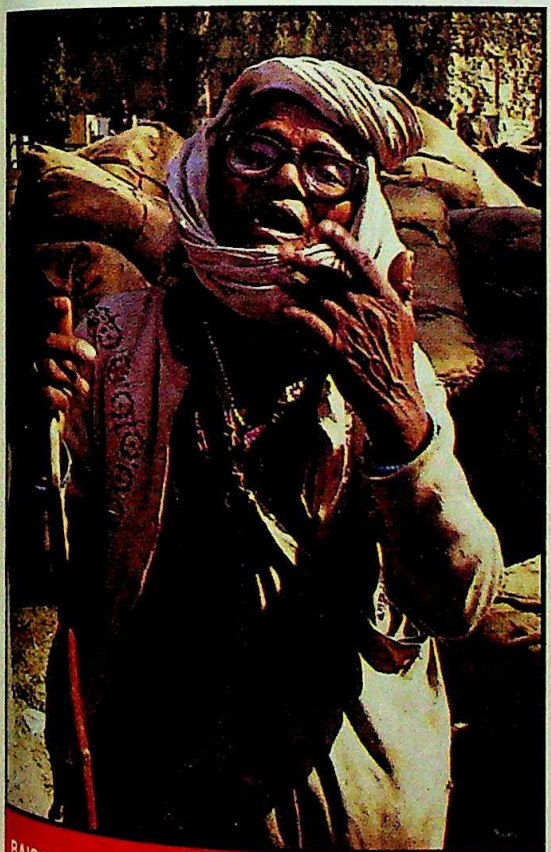


ANIRUDRA PRASAD, 65, lost his married daughter. He will now have to bring up his grandchild.

"My son-in-law took the relief money and left my little grand-daughter to starve."



BAISAKHI, 70, has come to see the district magistrate, having been refused a blanket by the pradhan.

"At voting time, we're pushed into the booth. Now they say our names are not on the list."

rice, over 55,000 blankets, over 25,000 tents and tarpaulin sheets, and over Rs 60 lakh in cash have been disbursed.

The truth is that all this is yet to reach the victims. Because the bureaucrats handling the operations don't have a strategy. As a result some victims even have to buy a relief blanket for Rs 20 from people who don't need it. And others are dying of pneumonia as the temperature dips to below five degrees celsius even before the winter sets in.

UTTARKASHI has, in fact, been trapped in a welter of confusion since the tragedy. For the first four days, nothing happened. Then the foodstuffs poured in. But what the villagers really needed was blankets. So, the area commissioner Negendra Singh, ordered that blankets be distributed. After that it was a virtual free-for-all. Admits Choube: "Hundreds who did not need blankets got them."

If the officials have a new plan, it doesn't seem any better. For, outside Choube's office lie hundreds of stinking, moth-eaten blankets, just arrived from Unnao jail. "They are not even worth the cost of ferrying them," says the chowkidar, while scores shiver, desperately praying for a blanket.

Despair is writ on the faces of Pratima Devi and Baisakhi, two aged women who have come to see Choube. Baisakhi, who lost her husband and four children, was refused a blanket by her village pradhan. Laments she: "Whenever it's time to vote, we are the first to be pushed to the booth. Now, they tell us that our names are not on the list. We don't exist." In Pratima Devi's case, when the relief van came to the roadhead, she was elbowed out. She rues this world of the young in which old people don't stand a chance.

That's because they have to go through the all-powerful pradhan. Not surprisingly, many village chiefs have made a profitable business of death. "Some kept all the relief material for themselves," admits Choube. But so far, only one of them has a case against him.

Other officials are also exploiting the tragedy. For instance, when a Dehra Dun blanket manufacturer offered to sell his entire stock at the cost price of Rs 63 per blanket, an official suggested he give a "receipt for Rs 75 per piece" instead. The deal, fortunately, never came through.

The villagers have to battle tremendous odds. Just off the

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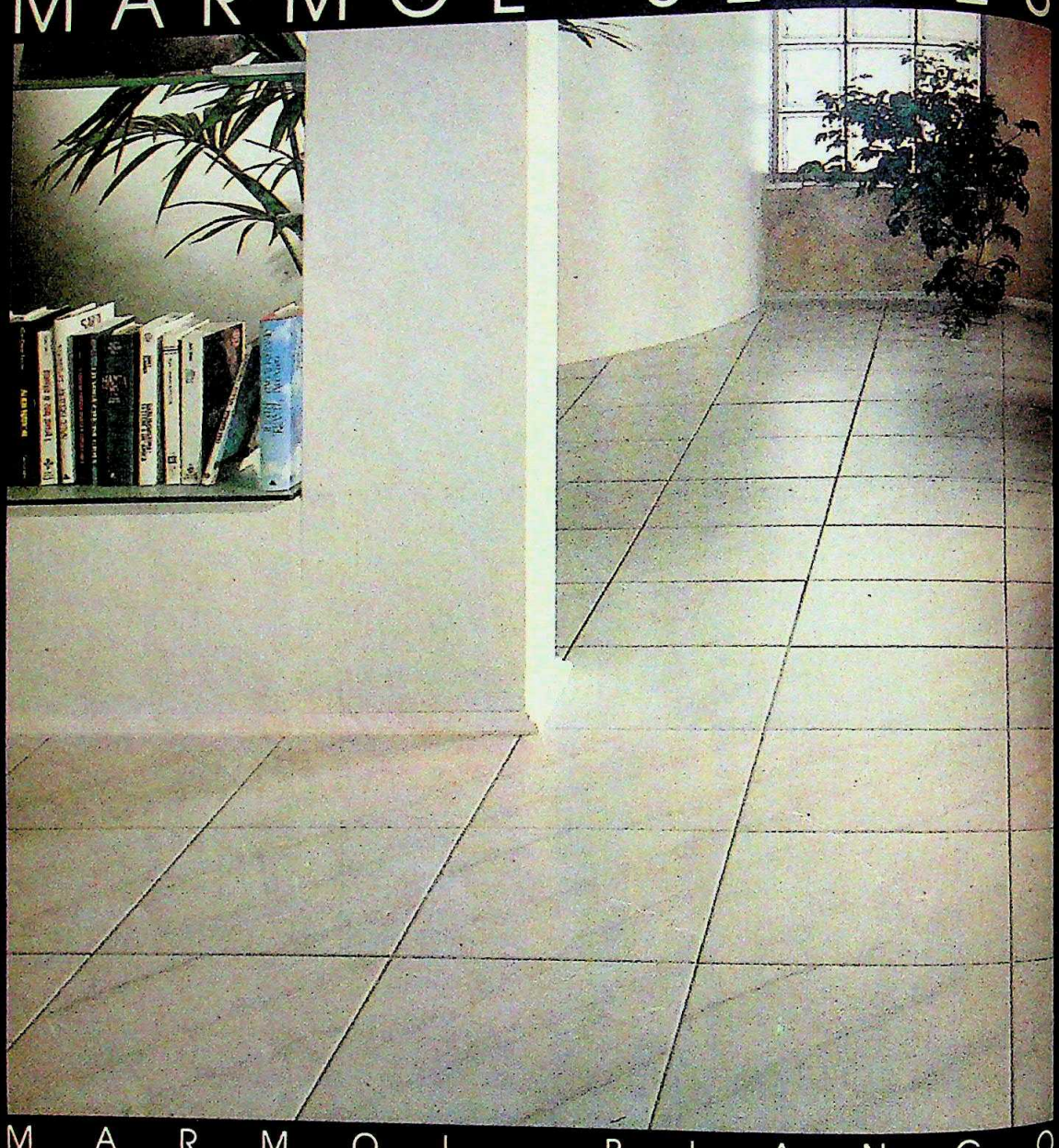

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MAKHAN LAL, 34, of Bharkot village, which is threatened by a man-eating panther.

"For three weeks, we've been sleeping out in the open. The panther is bound to get us."

major relief distribution centre at Bhatwari, Soban Das, 80, makes his way home. Being a Harijan, he was denied relief because 50 years ago he staked his claim to a Rajput's land. Today, the Rajput pradhan has taken his revenge. "When I told the pradhan that I was homeless, he said it should be a lesson to all Harijans who tried to live on a Thakur's land." But not all avenues are blocked. The local tehsildar has paid Soban interim relief—Rs 500 of the Rs 750 sanctioned. At least some people are honest, he says.

The distribution centre is always swamped with desperate people. An old man with a broken leg who could not make it to the roadhead for the dole. A sanyasin who was told that mendicants did not need tents or blankets. In stark contrast is Kiarak village pradhan Sharan Singh's house with bags of grain and seven tents with resting cattle.

Meanwhile, most people in the district have left their homes—ravaged or standing. They fear the houses will crumble with the next tremor—there have been 45 minor ones since then. As a result the already beleaguered administration has 30,000 homeless people on its hands.

With no roof over their heads, galvanised iron sheets are needed as much as blankets. The administration placed an order for 24,000 such sheets. But, true to form, the 51 trucks carrying them waited at Rishikesh for two nights as there were no takers for the freight bill. They reached Uttarkashi on November 7, days later.

But the villagers created make-shift tarpaulin settlements. Like the people of three battered villages—Dindsari, Lunthru and Bayana. Of the 60-odd families that have camped on some uncultivated land, 12 are completely helpless. Nirmala, 17, nine months pregnant, sleeps out in the cold. She can neither be moved to a hospital, nor has a government doctor visited her. Worse, even her husband hasn't been around since her parents were left destitute.

THE list is endless. There's Anirudra Prasad, 65, who has brought his little granddaughter to live with him after the quake killed his daughter. Says he: "My son-in-law took the relief money and left my grand-daughter to starve. He did not even bother to cremate my daughter."

Not surprisingly, Anirudra is desolate. He feels enveloped by darkness. How does he plan to support the child? "I don't know. My mind is not working. I am not mad but I am not normal." Though overcome by despair, Anirudra still remembers his cattle with love. A Jersey cow he had bought for Rs 7,200 died. He wants to cremate it. "I had its milk, I loved it." With 30,000 cattle lost, the owners tenderly protect the survivors from the cold with every spare cloth-piece. Says Hira Singh, 60, of Aungi, a village of sheep and cattle: "We may survive the cold, but our cattle and children will not."

Government relief may seem like a distant mirage, but help is coming from other quarters. Voluntary organisations like Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG) and the Bhuvaneshwari Mahila Ashram have adopted the make-shift villages, and are helping to erect temporary structures. They have just one doctor, Abhijit Das, who has his hands full attending to pneumonia cases. And with the only water source surrounded by filth and excreta, he fears that an epidemic could strike.

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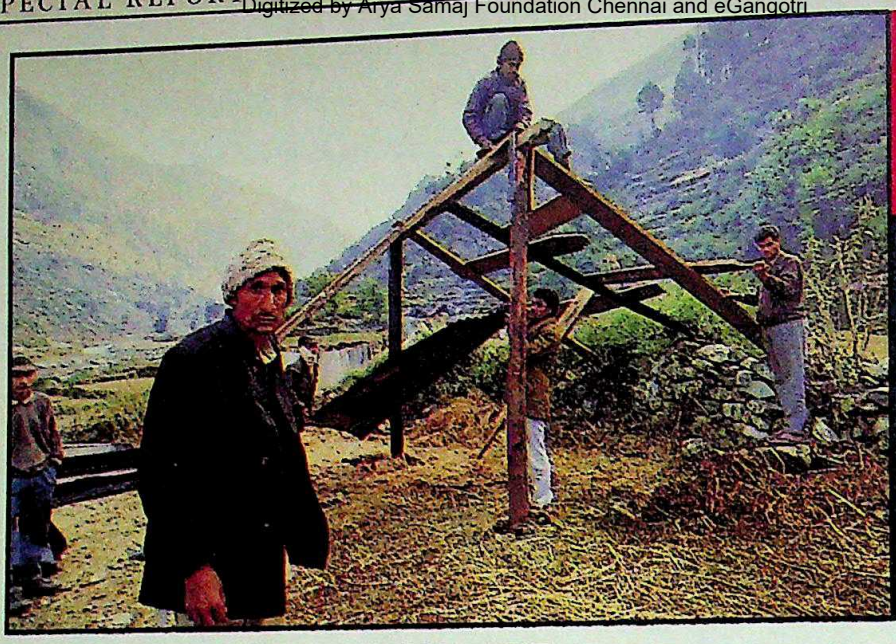
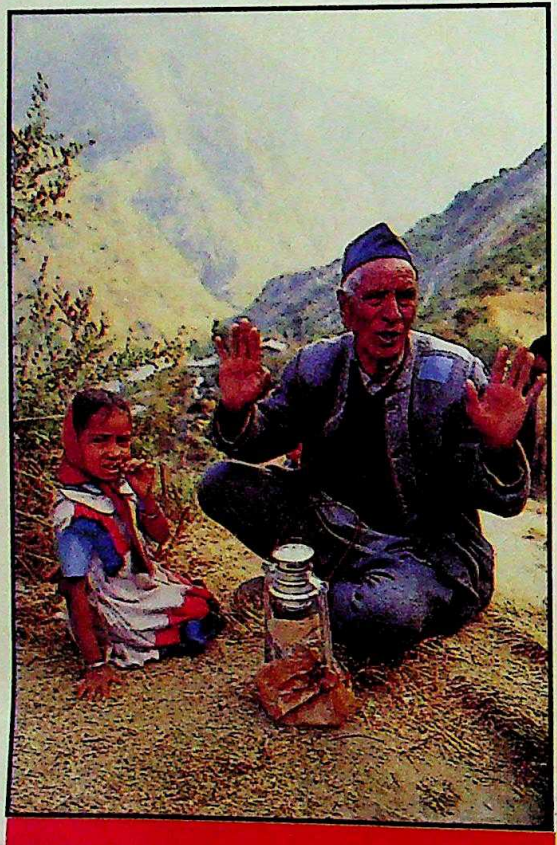


RAMESHWAR, 55, a farmer, fears that roaming cattle must have eaten away his crop.

"No one in the village has sown a thing so far. Will they help us when we starve?"



SOBAN DAS, 80, who lives off the relief centre, Bhatwari, was denied aid because he is a Harijan.

"I was homeless. The pradhan said it was a lesson for Harijans living on Thakurs' land."

The volunteers, who have been camping with the villagers, have received little help from the district administration. Because apart from logistics and economics, relief is also embroiled in politics. The officials told the volunteers that they would have to access supplies through the RSS. In fact, it is the RSS workers who have set up camp at the district hospital. "The administration has been very cooperative. They have given us gas cylinders and vehicles," says Uttarkashi RSS chief Gian Chand.

BUT state Congress(I) workers are peeved at the political mileage that the RSS has drawn from the unfortunate quake. As a result, they have been launching agitations against every BJP MP who comes to visit Uttarkashi. RSS men allege that Congress(I) workers even raided their godown. "We lodged an FIR and that is why we have got police protection," says Gian Chand.

The political bickering is only compounding a steadily sliding situation. As if grappling with homelessness were not enough, the people of Bharkot—a village close to Uttarkashi but now an 80-km drive away since the usual road is blocked—are facing another problem. Forced to camp out in the open, the survivors from this flattened village are threatened by a man-eating panther. The predator first dragged away a 10-year-old girl from Siri, a kilometre away. Then it attacked Bharkot, carrying away a goat. Makhan Lal, 34, who stands outside the crumpled heap of stones that once formed his home, says: "For three weeks we have been sleeping in the open. The panther is bound to get us."

But the worst is yet to come—in six months from now. For the quake struck just around the time the villagers were meant to harvest their paddy and sow their wheat. Rameshwar, 55, who owned a large plot of land, says that the cattle must have eaten all his crop. "How else could they have lived?" he says. And, like most others, he too lost his stock of grain among the rubble of his house.

With the frost having set in, there's little they can do. Rameshwar has lost interest. Says he: "No one has sown a thing. Will thay help us when we starve?"

Having lost everything—even the will to live—for Rameshwar, Soban Das, Baisakhi and many others like them, things couldn't get any worse.

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CHESS

A Winning Gambit

Viswanathan Anand's feats inspire a sudden surge in the game

CHESS maestro Viswanathan Anand hasn't merely brought a few trophies home. He has rediscovered chess for India. And overnight fuelled an interest that's rearing grandmasters and international masters by the dozen.

To effect that radical change, Anand needed no intricate moves. He just followed Dennis Lillee's assertion, that's rearing grandmasters and international masters by the dozen.

To effect that radical change, Anand needed no intricate moves. He just followed Dennis Lillee's assertion, in a different sport: "If you get just one great fast bowler, dozens will want to emulate him." And what a role-model Anand, 21, proved to be. World junior champion, India's first grandmaster, the first Asian to reach the Candidates' quarter finals. And the recent wins over Gary Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov.

Those emulating Anand are now themselves queueing up for laurels. There are already two grandmasters and 14 international masters compared to the lone international master in Manuel Aaron a few years ago. Bhagyashree Thipsay has just bagged the Asian women's crown. An eight-year-old named Surya Shekhar Ganguly has ended third in the world under-10. And, most importantly, the country now cradles over a hundred internationally rated players.

Dhruv Sawhney, president of the All India Chess Federation, ascribes this spectacular surge to Anand who has "given Indian players the confidence that they can take on the best in the world and beat them".

Some incentives have helped too. The growing prize money on the international circuit is one. Then, the Union Bank of India has provided jobs to half a dozen international masters. And an industrial house footed Anand's bill in the run-up to his battle with Karpov. Sponsorships clearly are no longer limited to cricket alone.

But, for the Indian Government, chess is not in the same genre as cricket. It is a Category C sport. So, no funds, no perks, no jobs and no clearances. In spite of his Arjuna award and a room full of trophies, Anand still has to get the Government nod's each time he is invited abroad. And he is lucky. He at least gets it. Others are refused permission even if the organisers are picking up the tab.

Despite official apathy, lack of incentives and little coaching, Indian players are increasingly queueing up for laurels by the dozen.

The recent Asian team championship in Malaysia is a case in point. The invitation came, but the top three players—Anand, Praveen Thipsay, Dibyendu Barua—were not available. The federation thought it was a golden chance to give exposure to some promising youngsters. Sorry, said the Sports Ministry. The implication: those yet to prove themselves at the international level will not be cleared.

That evokes the chicken-or-egg-first question. How does one prove oneself? Only by playing at the international level. But as Sawhney points out, "We hold only two or three international tournaments every year. Those too are sponsored by business houses. And our players don't get invited abroad often because it is all on a reciprocal basis." Worse, no tournaments mean no rise in ratings, and, in turn, even fewer invitations.

Anand's case, of course, was exceptional. One, he is blessed with amazing natural talent. Two, he hones it using the latest in chess theory to which he has access, thanks to his family. It all comes on disks these days and Anand's sister sent him a lap-top computer from abroad. Barua, on the other hand, is hobbled by perhaps the most limited opening repertoire among the day's grandmasters. The reason: he never had a chance to improve on it in his younger days, and now it's too late for him to start anew.

As for coaching, even Anand did not have it until he roped in master-strategist Mikhail Guryevich this year. And Bhagyashree was lucky to have married Praveen who coaches her. For the country's young talent, the only top-flight training comes from Soviet coaches under a protocol agreement, which is sporadic. Others contact Manuel Aaron for international chess informators. The Government has repeatedly refused to hire professional foreign coaches.

If the game is looking up in the country of its origin, it is only because of some individuals who have taken inspiration from Anand and borrowed a bit of technique from Barua. Now for the Government to lend them an ear.

—RAHUL PATHAK

Bhagyashree: crown-princess

SHARAD SAXENA

Anand: leading the pack

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Guts and
-the M

J. Anand makes a triumphant come

Sept 8th, 1991. *The Madras Race Track witnessed a horrific Formula car crash involving J. Anand of TEAM MRF.*

Anand's machine cartwheeled four times across the track, trapping its hapless driver underneath. It was a poignant moment when Anand was extricated from his mangled car and rushed to the hospital.

Would he ever race again?

Sept 15th, 1991. *A week after the accident, the Madras Race Track witnessed an incredible comeback by J. Anand of TEAM MRF in his Formula–3 car.*

Anand roared to victory in the prestigious 15–lap Grand Prix in a fiery and gutsy exhibition of formula car racing. Well done, Anand. MRF salutes you. You epitomize qualities closest to ***the MRF way.***

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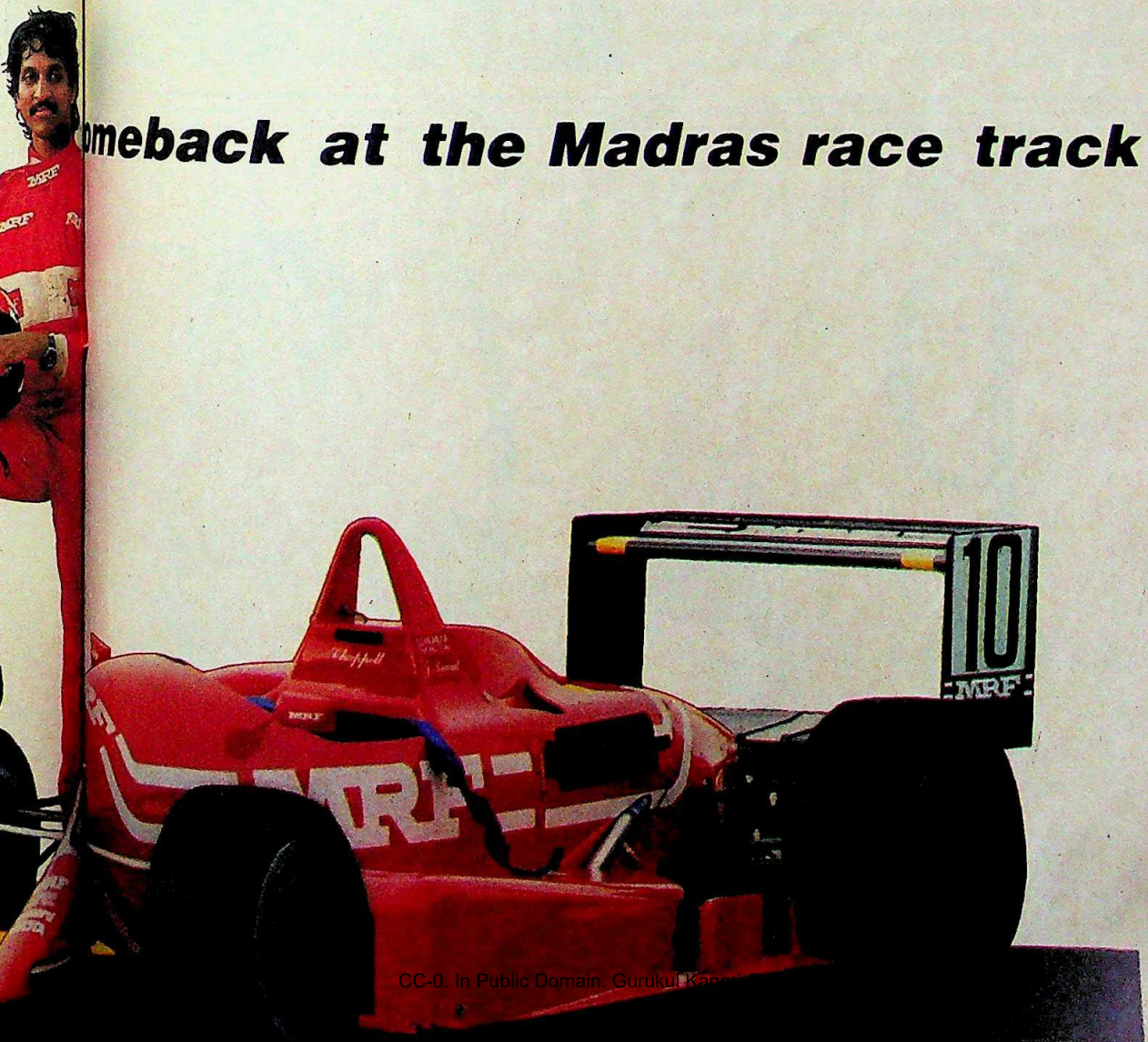

GOLDWIRE/91/925

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CRICKET

Selectors' Slip

Team for Australia is thin on bowling

THE Indian cricket team can lay claim to having the best batting side in the world today. But any of its players would find it difficult to face the battery of cutters that the national selection committee keeps hurling at them.

Last fortnight, the five-member committee, headed by Naren Tamhane, met in New Delhi to decide the line-up for the Australian series that ends with the World Cup. As usual, there were some surprise deliveries.

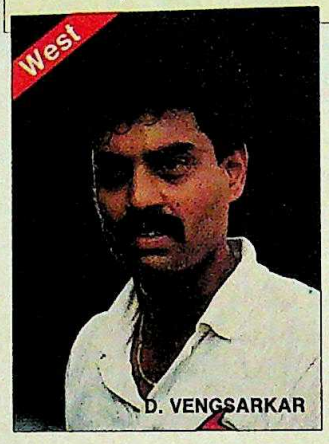
Thrown back in the team were Sharjah discards K. Srikkanth, Dilip Vengsarkar and Chandrakant Pandit. Also in were two new faces: all-rounder Saurav Ganguly and batsman Praveen Amre. Bounced out were out-of-form W.V. Raman, leg-spinner Anil Kumble and, most surprisingly, Vinod Kambli, the promising Bombay left-hander who played a couple of gritty knocks at Sharjah.

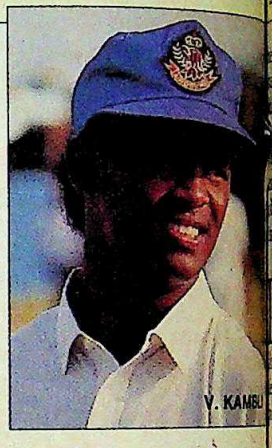
Overall, the new team headed by Mohammed Azharuddin is grossly imbalanced for the forthcoming Australian Test series. While it has a surfeit of batsmen—as many as 10 out of the 15—it lacks a bowling attack that could get the Australians, rated the best in the world, out twice. As Abbas Ali Baig, former Test opener and team manager, says: "We have an embarrassment of riches in batting. But unfortunately in our bowling line-up for Test matches, we may just be embarrassed."

The Australian pitches are hard and bouncy which is good for the pacemen. But many of the wickets take spin. Traditionally off-spinners have been successful in Australia. Yet the selectors were content with just one regular left-arm spinner, Venkatapathy Raju. Vice-captain Ravi Shastri is at best a part-time spinner as his 143 Test wickets have come in 73 Test matches. Selectors have preferred to rely heavily on a pace attack that has no genuine quickies. Kapil Dev and Manoj Prabhakar are accurate. The fastest of the lot, J. Srinath, is promising but erratic. And Subroto Banerjee is yet to be tested.

In the batting line-up too, the selectors have been wayward in their choice. Srikkanth, whom Tamhane said he

Zonal quotas saw Vengsarkar replace Kambli...





It's Time You Felt The PACE

PACE

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...and the new entrants in the team kept the regional balance.

...m dropped for Sharjah because he was "inconsistent", ...ddenly became acceptable because Azharuddin intervened ...ring the committee deliberations and insisted that he ...ded a third opener. The ostensible reason: the bouncy ...stralian pitches suit Srikkanth's explosive style. But in ...ality, to put pressure on Ravi Shastri, a potential rival to his ...h. If Srikkanth and Sidhu succeed, Shastri will have a hard ...e keeping his own place as an opener.

...the middle order, the injustice done to Dilip Vengsarkar ...s been righted. But in the process, Kambli got the axe. For ...e strangest of reasons: the famous "quota" system that ...minates the Indian cricket selection. Though Tamhane ...es it, one of the members involved in the selection process ...ted out that just one look at the new entrants would reveal the zonal quid pro quo that goes on. Thus Vengsarkar swells the west's quota to five and so Kambli has to go. From the central zone Praveen Amre is in the team. From the east, Saurav Ganguly. And from the south: Srikkanth. Said a board insider: "Each zonal selector came to the meeting with his mind fully made up on getting his own man in. It was ridiculous."

Whatever the truth, the selection process in India continues to be dominated by considerations other than just players' form and performance. And as Chetan Chauhan, a former Test cricketer and national selector, and now an MP, says: "There are just too many changes, many of which don't hold to reason." Kambli, the newest victim of the vagaries of the selectors, is said to have taken his exclusion badly. So much so that when Union Minister Madhavrao Scindia, who is also the Cricket Board chief, went to Bombay, he made it a point to call up Kambli and reassure him that there was still a chance for him to be included for the World Cup.

If the new team, consisting of four former captains, has to do well in Australia, it has to pull up its stocks in several areas. Apart from a weak bowling attack, the ground fielding barring Azharuddin's, is horrendous. And so too is the running between the wickets by batsmen. Unless, there is dramatic improvement in these areas, only divine intervention may help save the team's Test match fortunes from going down under.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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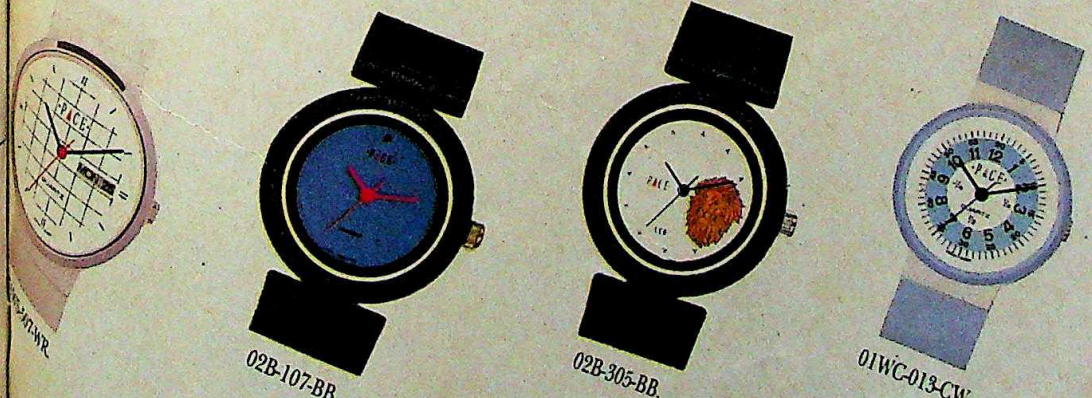

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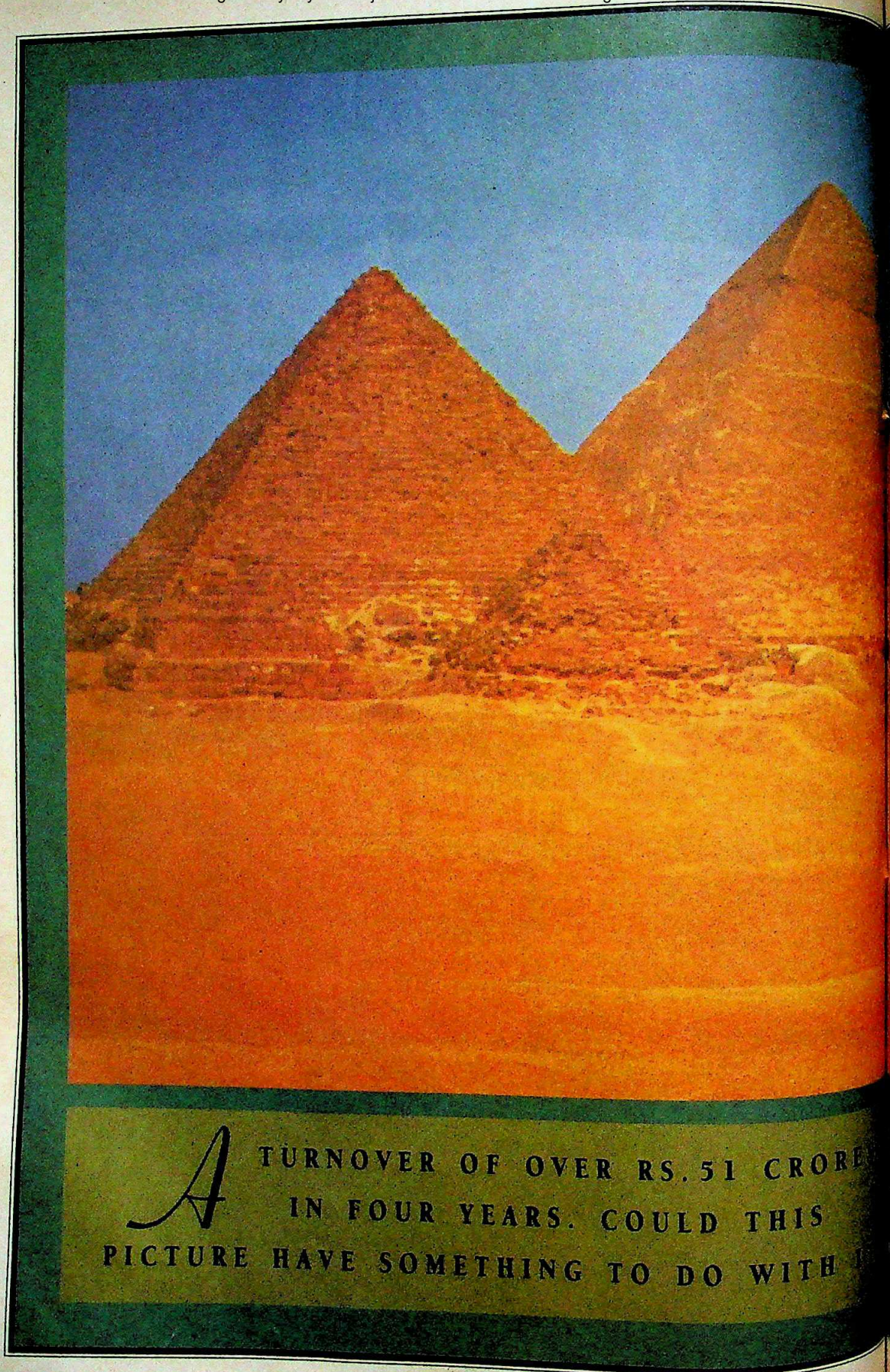

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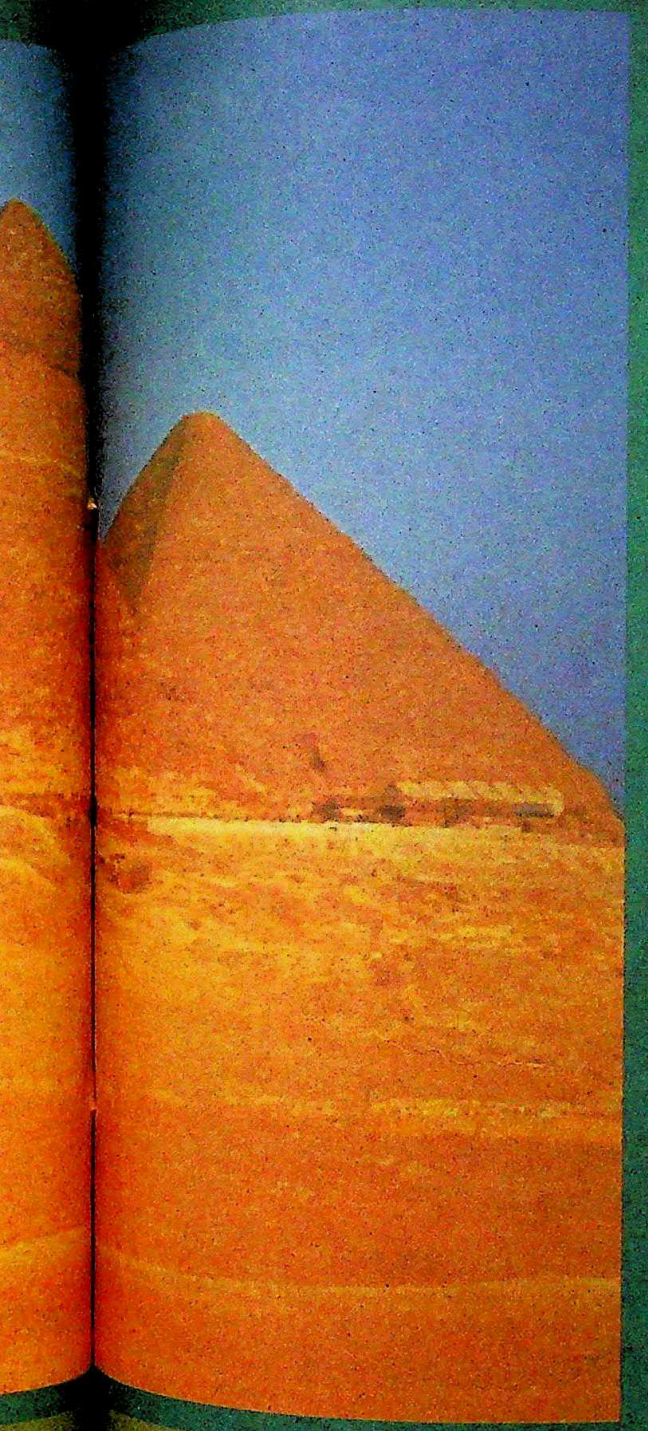

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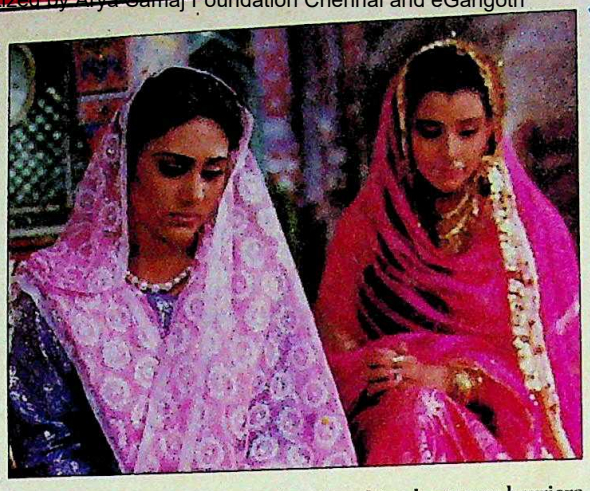
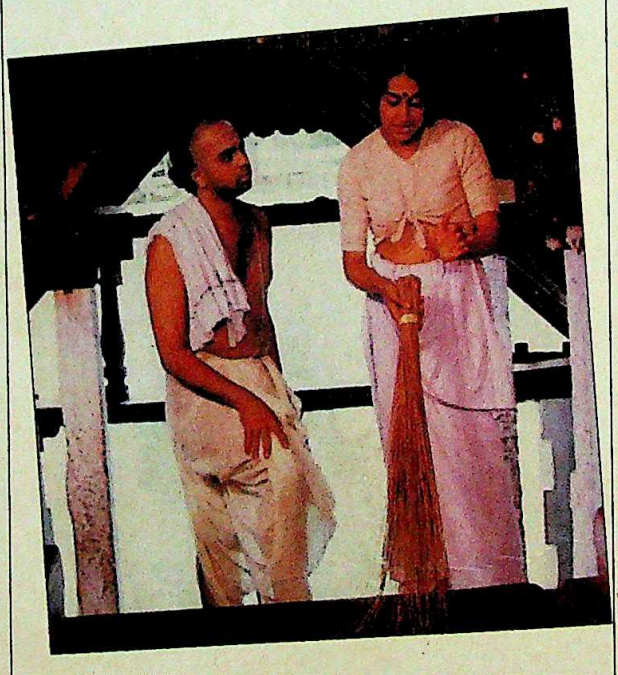
◆ Others might now consider DD an anachronism with the skies beaming down Ruth Rendall mysteries and rock music into Indian homes. But DD has suddenly leaped into the satellite age—without anyone being aware of it. It's business by fax these days in Mandi House—through satellite, that is. Last month Prithvi Rajan, a producer and a former employee of DD, filed a case in the Madras High Court and got a stay order from a single-judge court against any new productions being aired. So now, DD has to get a fax order from the Madras High Court every day before it can air its new programmes. In fact, Deputy Director-General S. Krishnan and Additional Director-General N. Sikdar camped in Madras last fortnight trying to unhook DD from the fax machine.

◆ *The World This Week* in Hindi? Yes. Prannoy Roy will be mouthing the lingua local in the near future—and that too without over to Vinod for a recap. The much-acclaimed programme never got near the ratings of the film-based programmes or prime-time serials as language was a barrier. Now *TWTW* has found a way of having its cake and eating it too. It'll be the same English version but the voice-over commentary will be in Hindi. And where it's a question of lip syncs—when people are talking—it will be subtitled. Talk about killing two birds in one shot.

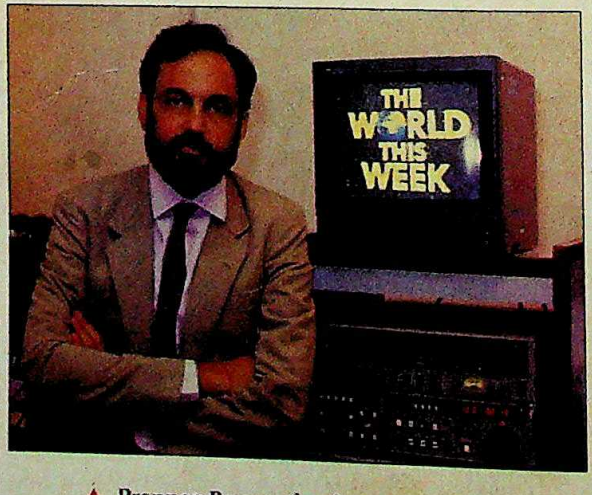
◆ Noticed anything different about the male Hindi news-reader lately? Well, he's not moving his neck much—it's all tied up in a *bandgala* coat. Last fortnight, DD sent a circular to the male readers asking them to wear a "prince coat"—*bandgala* to the rest of us—in the pursuit of uniformity. But strangely enough, the English news-readers are exempt. Apparently, their ties were regal enough. The news-readers now look like they've dropped in at the studio on their way to a wedding. The coats may not still give them a stiff upper lip but they certainly make for stiff necks.



▲ Dipika, Tiwari in *Tipu Sultan*: breaking language barriers



▲ A still from the teleserial *Kayar*: adult history



▲ Prannoy Roy on the show: going Hindi

◆ Finally, *Kayar*, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's magnum opus is on. This passage through "Kerala's feudal history"—as the author puts it—has been beautifully, though a bit eliptically, transferred to the small screen by M.S. Sathyu. All the hullaballoo was over a scene in which a woman sheds her clothes to escape punishment—reason enough to delegate it to the late night, supposedly adult hour and adult classification. Why can't DD grow up? The serial deals with adult themes all right—polygamy, liaisons, adultery. But then history too, is adult. And hats off to Sathyu for his painstaking efforts and mature handling of a fabulous novel.

◆ Tipu Sultan is going to be speaking in Kannada—much to the chagrin of Kannada serial makers who have threatened to agitate. Bangalore Doordarshan has just bought a 60-episode dubbed version. Ordinarily DD doesn't allow language translations of national network programmes. Even Ramanand Sagar had pressed for the *Ramayan* in Tamil. But in this case Karnataka Chief Minister Bangarappa pushed for the dubbed version. If this happens and sets a precedent, *Chanakya* will become a multi-linguist. Even if DD does not allow dubbing into regional languages, the least it could do is to provide subtitles.

—MADHU [illegible]

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LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Practising Preachers

The Christian clergy is reaching out to the poor

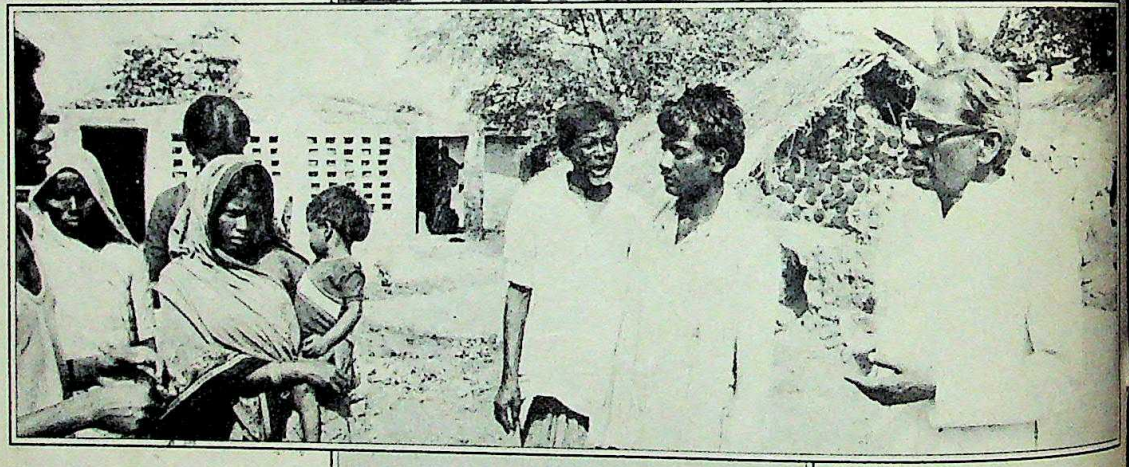
SOME are engaged in rescuing bonded labour. Others spearhead a fishermen's agitation against trawling or fight for the equality of Harijans. What sets them apart from conventional social activists is their calling—they are all Christian priests who term themselves Liberation Theologists.

Like Bishop Poulose Mar Poulose of the Church of the East, Trichur, there is a growing band of priests who are looking beyond the confines of the church and Christianity. Says Poulose: "Our concerns touch the poor, irrespective of caste and religion."

After all, they argue, they are doing just what Jesus Christ wanted—being an advocate of the needy. And using leftist thought for sociological analysis. Poulose shrugs it off by saying: "Using Marxian analysis does not make us Marxists."

Most liberation theologists found church rituals restrictive. Ten years ago, Father Philips Manthara walked out of what he calls the "institutionalised" church to work among the poor in Jansaut village near Patna. A decade of working with Sister Sudha among low caste Mushars has convinced him that he did the right thing. When he started, not one person in the village was educated. Now, children go to school, he has got the Government to construct houses, start fair price shops and a milk society.

Another notable example is James Culas, a Catholic priest near Trivandrum, who has organised over 2,000 families of impoverished bamboo workers. With the help of D. Antony, another parish priest, Culas forced the Government to not only supply raw material but buy finished products at reasonable prices.



Culas and Manthara: expanding community

The priests' balancing act between Jesus and Marx has left many in the establishment angry and confused.

Catholic priest Tom Kochery has spent over a decade organising poor fishermen in Kerala to fight against exploitation and against trawling which cut into their meagre earnings and destroyed the eco-system. The theology, he says, is now zeroing in on protection of the ecology: "We must look at larger questions and not just religion-related issues."

Inspired by the new theology, small groups have started working in various states. They are working among weavers, diamond cutters, salt and quarry workers in Tamil Nadu, slum dwellers in Maharashtra, fishermen in Goa and Kerala, and tribals in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

But their work entails much risk. Father Manthara who is also the vice-president of the Bihar PUCL unit, found his mission office burnt down by landlords as he was instrumental in getting bonded labourers released. And Father Chaklkal, who was fighting for bonded labourers in West Champaran, was once kidnapped.

More important, these priests often question the priorities of the church, accusing it of becoming a vested interest, acquiring real estate and earning enormous rents. Their balancing act between Jesus Christ and Karl Marx has left many in the church confused about their position on religion. Says Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorious: "They are doing some good work but it is fraught with many bad consequences." The church may not agree but liberation theologists are finally practising what they preach.

—RAMESH MENON and FARZAND AHMED

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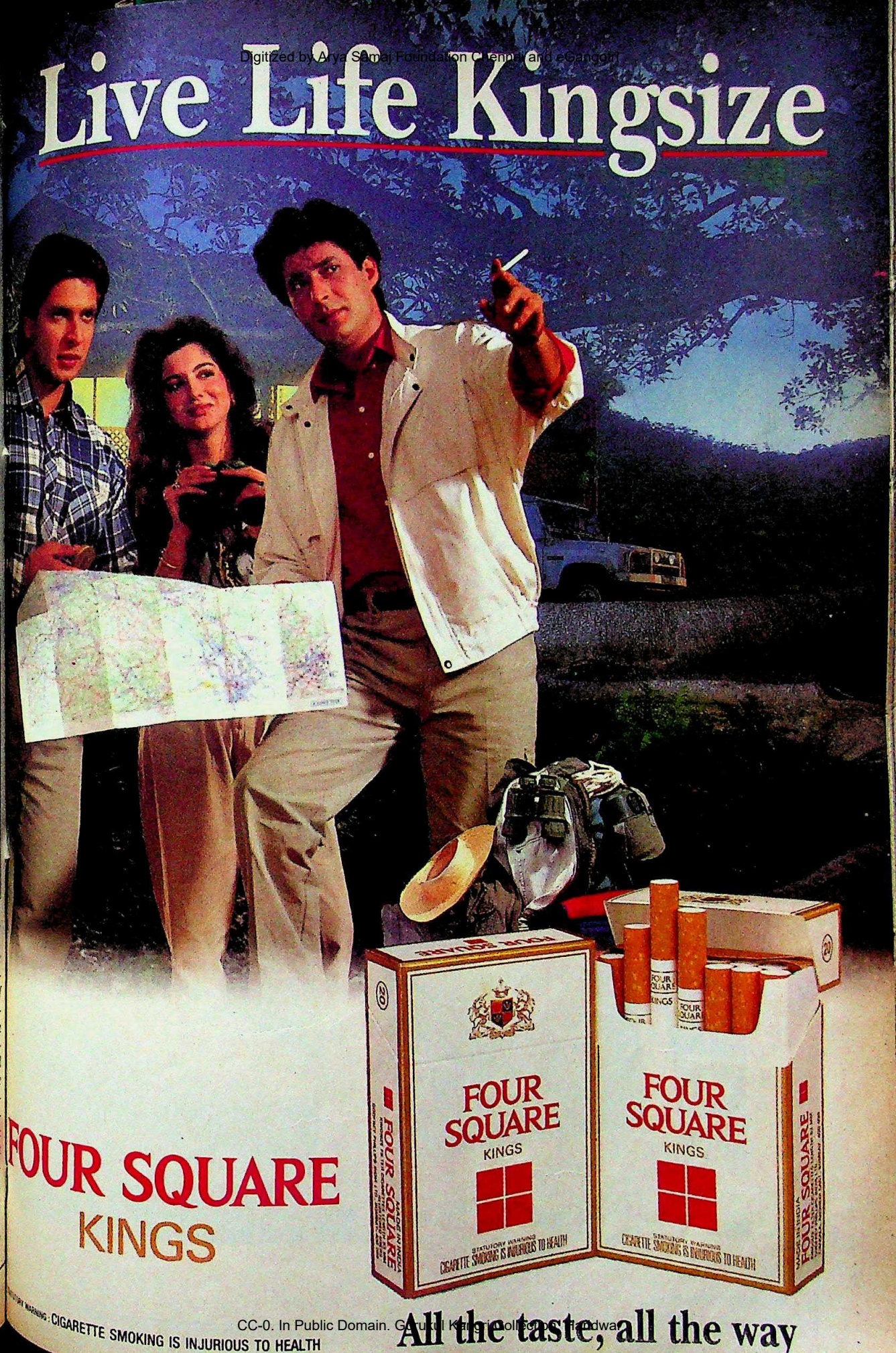

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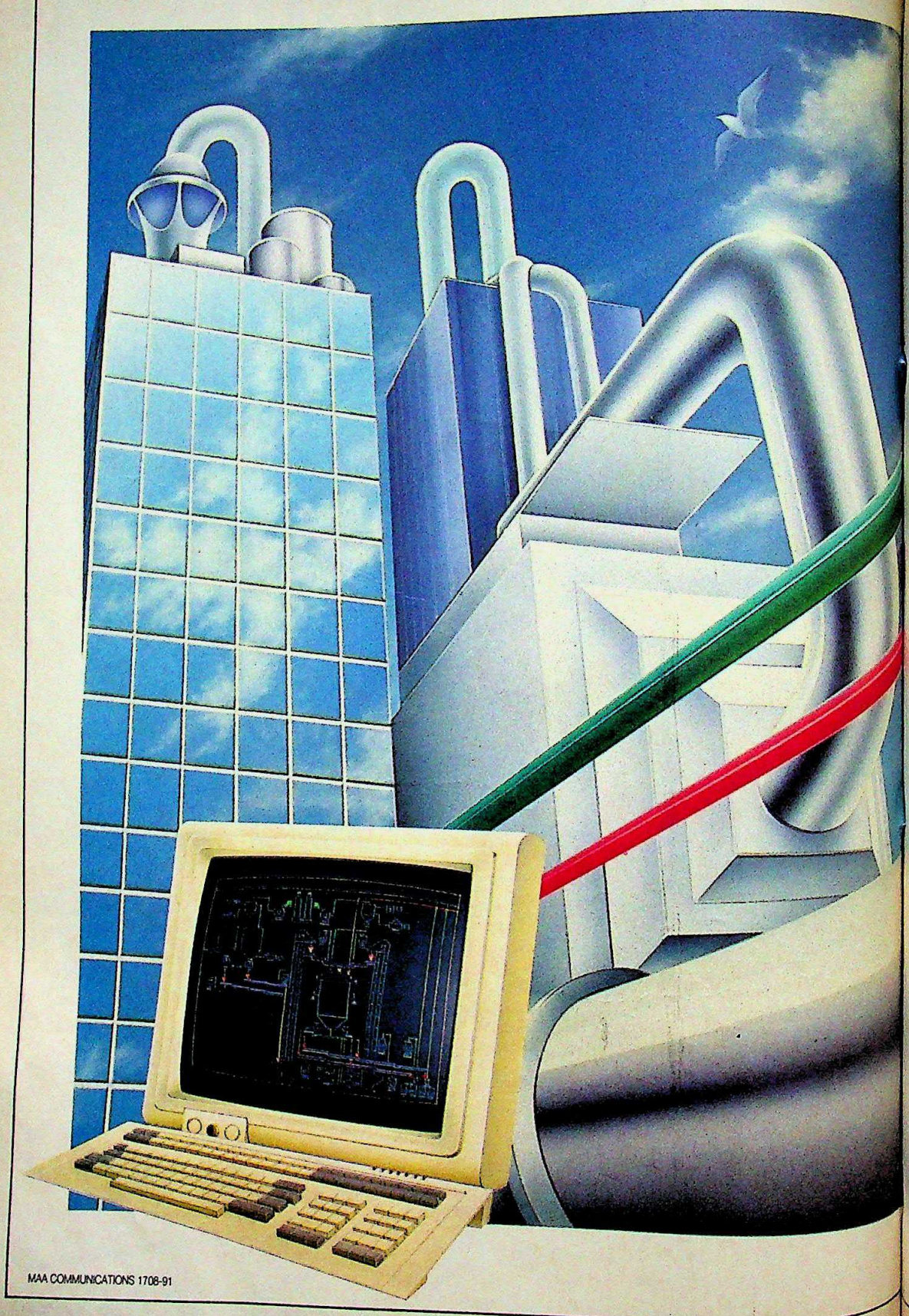

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HISTORY

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MAHATMA GANDHI

Legacy of Letters

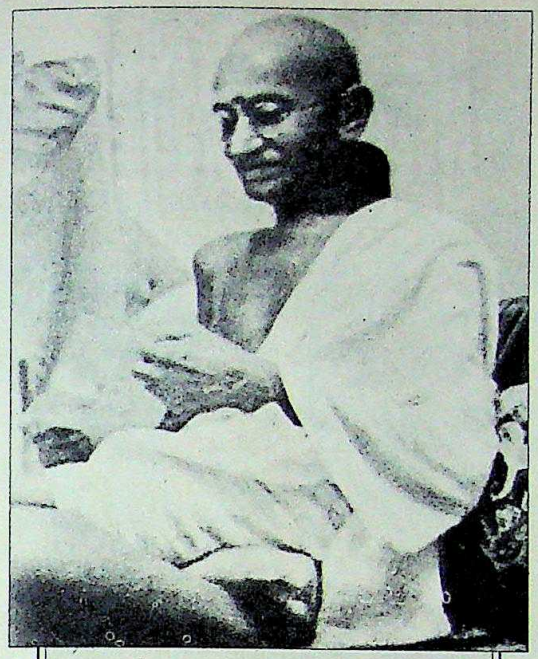
Recovered epistles reveal Bapu's charm

In a letter to Mahatma Gandhi, Ramji seeks a solution to his marital problem. Gandhi writes back with the advice: "First, you should have complete faith in religious celibacy. And then, you should have pure lustless love for your wife.... Once you have that love for your wife, you will be able to handle her by your piousness."

The letter to Ramji is only one of Gandhi's 1,400 epistles recently received by Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, revealing interesting facets to Gandhi's personality. The Mahatma was a tireless correspondent and never failed to reply to letters. Today, the ashram has 4,000 letters either written by Gandhi or addressed to him—the world's largest such collection.

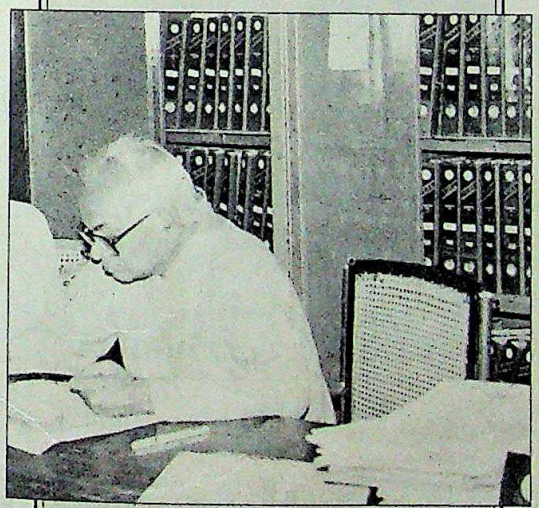
A significant letter is one written to Adolf Hitler in 1939. "Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request because of the feeling that any letter from me would be an impertinence. Something tells me I must make my appeal for whatever it may be worth. It is clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent war...."

The new letters came to light thanks to the ashram's untiring efforts to trace Gandhi's writings in individual possession. They are of special interest as they provide glimpses into Gandhi's relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and fellow ashramites. Two important letters are those written by Nehru to Gandhi in the late '20s. The first, a typed one, is dated February 22, 1929, and is written in his capacity as Congress general secretary. Addressing Gandhi as "Dear Sir", he writes: "As you are going to Burma may I request you to inspect the Burma PCC office and send us a report of your inspection?"



"First you should have complete faith in religious celibacy. And then, you should have pure lustless love for your wife. Till you do that, you won't leave an imprint on your wife."

Gandhi's letter of advice to Ramji



Gandhi (top); and Modi at Sabarmati Ashram: restoring history

The other letter is personal and dated December 1, 1928. In it Nehru begins affectionately with "My dear Bapuji", and describes how Congress workers were subjected to police blows during a demonstration in what is now Uttar Pradesh. "Most of us, including myself, received lathi blows on our bodies, which are slightly painful no doubt, but nothing worth shouting about...I got off rather lightly as two or three university students—one of them being Kamala's brother—took it upon themselves to receive the blows which might have hit me. Personally, if I may say so, I thoroughly enjoyed myself. It was an adventure after my heart."

Though penned at Allahabad, the letterhead reads, Hotel Savoy, Mussoorie. Perhaps, Nehru took a leaf from the Mahatma's book. He used every inch of paper from small waste paper chits to the blank side of printed press articles for his letters. Says D.R. Trivedi of the ashram's archive: "Several letters have the Mahatma's printed articles on their reverse. This helped us preserve his letters and press articles."

The new letters are mostly in Gujarati and include a set of 300 letters written to his cousins, Changanlal and Narandas. They reveal the Mahatma's concern for minute details of the ashram's functioning. In a letter from Yervada jail in 1932, Gandhi writes about the theft of bedrolls from the ashram to Narandas, who was then the ashram's secretary: "The one who has stolen the bedrolls must be quite well known to us.... Can't we approach the thief?"

Says Amrut Modi, director of the Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust: "He believed in maintaining live contact with a cross-section of people and he often used letters as a means to propagate his ideology." The Mahatma could write in as many as six languages and sign in 11, including south Indian scripts. His letter to Rehana, daughter of Abbas Tyabji, begins in Urdu and later switches to Gujarati.

Gandhi's letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur of Patiala are laced with humour and reflect the close relationship between them. He addressed her variously as, My dear idiot, My dear deceiver, My dear teacher of slang, My dear warrior and My dear rebel.

Just how many letters Gandhi wrote in his lifetime remains a riddle. But, as Modi says: "We will continue our letter collection exercise. For the Mahatma and his letters are an unending chapter."

—UDAY MAHURKAR

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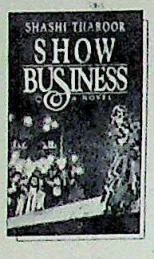
Reel Yarn

A hit, but no blockbuster

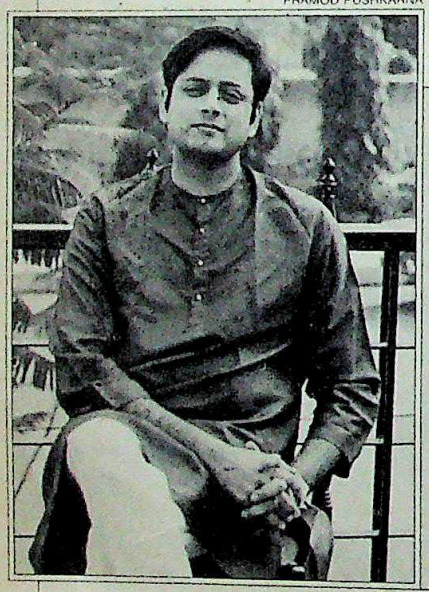


SHOW BUSINESS
by SHASHI THAROOR
Viking India
Pages: 310
Price: Rs 195

By TARUN J. TEJPAL

REALITY it seems will continue to beggar the imagination. Especially the reality of Indian films. First, Allan Sealy appropriated the vague outlines of MGR's life to underpin his *Hero*. And now Tharoor has used the life of an even more glittering icon, Amitabh Bachchan, as a scaffolding to hang his film extravaganza on.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Tharoor: top class skills

While *Hero* worked as a fable, *Show Business* is in a realist mode—as much as any book on India's great dream machine can be. But to Tharoor's credit, the Bachchan echoes are of no real consequence. For the theme is the 70 mm illusion, and even megastars can fill up only a part of the big screen.

Ashok Banjara, elitist scion of a politician, leaves his corporate job to court fortune in Bollywood. Fortune responds with amazing ardour; he becomes a megastar. He marries Maya, a successful actress. She quits films to tend home; meantime Banjara spreads himself around, sexually. Mostly with Mehnaz Elahi, reigning sex symbol.

On the work front, he makes the transition from actor to politician; and discovers there is more than a difference of nomenclature involved. For politics is the manipulation of reality, while films was of illusions. He gets embroiled in a Swiss bank rap, quits politics, returns to films. But the producers are not queueing up any more.

The stage is set for a tragic denouement: there is an accident on the sets, Banjara goes into coma; as the success spiral of his life grinds to a halt, his past begins to gain on him, bringing its burden of regrets and recriminations. At the very end, Tharoor makes a leap of the imagination, bringing in an ambiguity and illusion, more of which could have served the book better.

Of the interesting literary devices Tharoor uses—many first person voices, the story in flashback—the best is the one borrowed from Mario Vargas Llosa. Just as Pedro Camacho's fantastical soap operas interspersed *Aunt Julia And The Scriptwriter*, the story of Banjara is interwoven with chapters on the movies he acts in, with even songs rendered in a doggerel English.

This is an interesting, competent, fun book. With less of formula and more of energy and fantasy, Tharoor could have made it a superb one. For a writer of top class talent, Tharoor disappoints by overwriting: he spells out resonances that ought to be left for the reader to hear. And there is the excessive punning. The great Indian novel on films is still up for the writing; and Tharoor's best is yet to come. ■

EXCERPT

Kissing is one thing they don't practise in Hindi cinema: our censors don't like it. But no amount of practice would have prepared me for kissing Radha Sabnis. I am buffeted by a mistral of cigarette fumes, then swept away into alternate waves of asphyxiation and resuscitation. Holding my own in the exchange is like trying to out-blow a vacuum-cleaner. I am still orally imprisoned, eyes shut in breathless disbelief when I feel her fingers explore my teeshirt like a skeleton searching for a burial place.

Janus Jiddu

Krishnamurti's other side

LIVES IN THE SHADOW WITH J. KRISHNAMURTI
by RADHA RAJAGOPAL SLOSS
Bloomsbury, UK
Pages: 335
Price: Rs 738

By SUDHIR KAKKAR

IN the Gita, Arjuna, curious about the nature of the highly-evolved spiritual personality, asks Krishna: "What is the language of one whose understanding is poised? How does he speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?" Biographers who have sought an answer to Arjuna's question in relation to such a contemporary Jiddu Krishnamurti, have followed Krishna's lead in describing him as calm, compassionate and detached from passion.

Radha Sloss: an insider view

In his infinite wisdom, Krishna did not mention that his description was of the spiritual man's public face which may not be identical with his private persona. This, indeed, is the thesis of Radha Sloss' book: Krishnamurti, as a man divided within himself, the sage existing in the same body and mind with a vain youth and a fearful child who had a talent for manipulating the people who helped him.

Radha is a uniquely privileged biographer. For over 50 years, her father, Rajagopal, was Krishnamurti's confidant, editor, manager and fund-raiser. Radha's mother, Rosalind, a strikingly-attractive American, was Krishnamurti's lover and companion for much of her adult life after Radha's birth. Radha herself grew up in Ojai, Krishnamurti's California retreat, with the sage as a second, doting father. What she has produced is a riveting, well-written tale of the triangle between Krishnamurti, Rosalind and Rajagopal, with all the secrets, passion and jealousy of such triangles

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REMEMBER THAT FIRST TONGA RIDE?
YOU SQUEALED IN LITTLE-GIRL TERROR
AND MY HEART LURCHED.
WAS IT ONLY FEAR?
WE CAME TO A CROSS ROAD,
AND I LEFT MORE THAN JUST MY VILLAGE
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Radha is not a dispassionate ob-
rever. When the triangular relation-
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mpathies lie with her parents whose
ves, she feels, were more blighted
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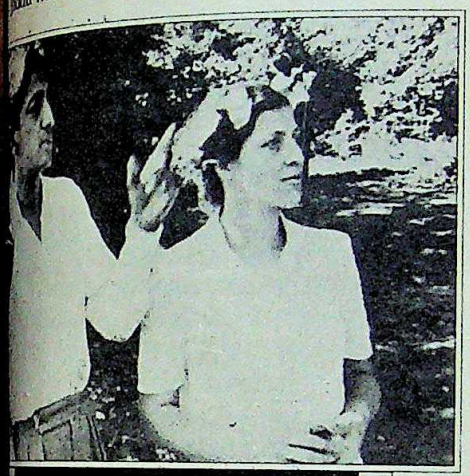
Siddhu with Rosalind: passionate tie



EXCERPT

Allowing for his unconventional attitude towards marriage, Krishna's actions are understandable, but not excusable in the context of his relationship with Raja, who had given his life to helping him. Nor were they excusable in the context of the chaste image he continued to project and was careful not to tarnish, although it meant living a *sub-rosa* life. He would continue to affirm publicly that true love does not distinguish between human relationships, but is boundlessly there for everyone. Yet privately, he would frequently and eloquently declare his love to Rosalind and insist 'what is between us is the most important thing in our lives.'

n divorcee and Rajagopal's sense
etrayal on finding out his wife's
acy with Krishnamurti, it is diffi-
to believe her parents were only
ms, not active participants, in the
ing of their fates.
with a natural gift for language,
namurti had distilled the essence
panishadic and Buddhist wisdom
could convey it with rare elo-
nce. His magnetic personality and
adism made him Rajneesh's spir-
ancestor. Like the Osho, he en-
d huge success with the more
ectual and higher-placed sections
ciety. He liked expensive cars and gourmet food. And like his divine namesake, Krishnamurti was always surrounded by *gopis*. But he had to have a Radha, a special woman, whom he could relate to.

Every philosophy, Nietzsche wrote, is disguised autobiography. Radha points to the connection between Krishnamurti's teachings and his personal life. The problems he talked of with such deep understanding, of fear and its relation to death, ambition and insecurity, were the ones he struggled with. His frequent dissembling, which made one long-time follower call him a "congenital liar", arose from his wish to avoid unpleasant emotional situations. When asked by Radha why he lied, he said, "because of fear".

But how much are Radha's interpretations of Krishnamurti's life coloured by her own sense of betrayal? The truth about any life is impossible to know, even by its liver. Today we are satisfied if the story of a life is consistent, coherent and intelligible. This biography certainly meets these criteria.

For many, the revelations of Krishnamurti's long liaison with Rosalind, which led to three pregnancies and abortions, will be of special interest. The sexual life of mystics has been the subject of enduring fascination. Promisers of freedom from nature, human and otherwise, we have naturally wanted to know how the teachers themselves coped with nature's forces. Unlike the reported perversions of many gurus, pathetically trying to restore sensual balance, Krishnamurti expressed his sexuality in a relationship which brought much happiness to both partners. Those disappointed that he did not transcend human nature should ponder the words of Thomas Mann: "Truth demands the hard confession that thought and spirit come badly off, in the long run, against nature."

Krishnamurti's penetrating insight into the human condition came out of his being profoundly human, more human than otherwise. None of us can ask for a better epitaph. ■

Wide Ball

The spinner settles scores

SPIN PUNCH
by DILIP DOSHI
Rupa & Co
Pages: 237
Price: Rs 50

By SHEKHAR GUPTA

TO describe a master bowler's career in terms of a batsman's metaphor is unkind. But such is Dilip Doshi's fate. He had everything a left-arm spinner needs: length and line, flight, spin and even killer instinct. What he lacked was timing. Not with the bat but with his arrival on the national cricketing scene. It wasn't his fault he fought for a place in the team with Bishen Bedi at his prime and a youthful Ravi Shastri.

Doshi: wasted effort

It wasn't the fault of either the Board, Bedi or even Sunil Gavaskar, as Doshi insinuates in this self-serving autobiography that does little credit to his cricketing talent or his intellect. The book is a bland description of the matches and his "lovely" deliveries or how his performance was greater than others as he got top-of-the-line batsmen while they got the tails. I'm not sure how Kapil, who formed with Doshi Indian cricket's last destructive duo, would react to it. All I know is, Doshi, who complains about being left out of one-day games by Gavaskar will have a much harder time getting into an eleven led by Kapil.

There were questions Doshi needed to answer and raise. Why doesn't India produce spinners any more? What can be done to improve the state of Indian pitches? A pity the last of India's great spinners has wasted an autobiography merely to settle old scores. ■

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Books

SCARLETT by Alexandra Ripley (Rupa; Rs 100). In the *Gone With The Wind* sequel, Scarlett turns predictable, pining for Rhett as the scene shifts to Ireland. Daughter Cat replaces Bonny, and Rhett returns in Mills & Boon ending.

LEILA: AN INQUIRY INTO MORALS by Robert M Pirsig (Bantam; Rs 450). Phaedrus is done with zen and motorcycles, and now talks with Leila, examining the values of the '90s.

EDWINA MOUNTBATTEN: A LIFE OF HER OWN by Janet Morgan (India: Rs 595). The colourful life of the viceriene captured in its extravagardness and glamour.

Music

ROBIN HOOD: PRINCE OF THIEVES Original Motion Picture Soundtrack (Music cassette; Rs 45, Polydor). With the music score, can the film be far behind? The score from Kevin Costner's latest international hit may not be setting the Sherwood Forest on fire but it does contain the single by Bryan Adams—'Everything I Do, I Do It For You'—which has already become as popular as the film itself.

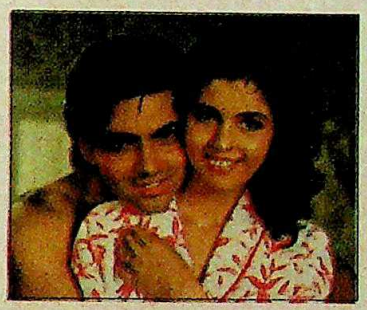
JOHNNY LOCKWOOD IN CONCERT (Rang Bhavan, Bombay, November 27). Playing his second concert in Delhi after a memorable performance at the Jazz Yatra many years ago, jazz violinist Johnny Lockwood is presented by the ICCR and the Alliance Francaise as part of a quartet. Lockwood is an eccentric but powerful voice in the modern jazz scene.

Movies

NEHRU—THE JEWEL OF INDIA (Directed by Kumar Kiran; Starring: Pratap Sharma, Girish Karnad, Amjad Khan, Tanuja). This song-and-dance feature film on India's first prime minister has Asha Bhosale belting out songs, Amjad Khan playing his rolly-polly villainous self, and a lavishly choreographed *mujra*—watched in rapt attention by Motilal Nehru. Bound to be controversial. Besides, it's a Nehru show all the way. Gandhi and Patel have walk-on parts and Indira doesn't get beyond adolescence. In English and Hindi.

BANJARAN (Directed by Harmesh Malhotra; Starring: Rishi Kapoor and Sridevi). Malhotra probably banked on the hope that he'd be third time lucky as well, but the director of *Nagina* seems to be lost without his snakes. Sridevi looks prettier, Rishi Kapoor podgier. But this tale of reincarnation somehow just doesn't come to life. Nor is the music otherworldly. Avoidable.

SAU CRORE (Directed by Dev Anand; Starring: Dev Anand, Naseeruddin Shah, Fatima Sheikh). The never-say-die Dev Anand can't resist the arc lights. He's back with a story-line obviously inspired by the sensational murder of badminton ace, Syed Modi. Presented with elan—outdoor locations include Switzerland and England—the film unfortunately suffers from the regular ailments. Bathos replaces pathos and noise pretends to be music. Shah is better than Dev Anand, Fatima Sheikh and Raman Kapoor all put together—which is still not saying much.



Video

GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT (Directed by Paul Wendkos; Starring: Martin Sheen and Brenden Frazer). Based on the life of Bobby McLaughlin, who was falsely held for murder, the film explores the relationship between Bobby (Frazer) and his foster father (Sheen), who believes his son's innocence. Their struggle against the legal system, however, fails to evoke the drama it should. Ordinary.

Odd ends

APOLLO CIRCUS (Cross Maidan, Bombay). Featuring the dare-all Bangle Ride, a new stunt that has audiences gasping, Apollo Circus is back after wooing Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Other new acts include a game of football played by dogs and a Himalayan black bear riding a bicycle. Over 25 fascinating items with animals, acrobats and trapeze artistes.

Art

MEMORIES OF ARA (Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay, November 13-19). A rare exhibition, from a private collection. The works are in mixed media as Ara rarely opted for the formal approach of oil on canvas.

WATER COLOURS by Shyamal Dutta Ray (Gallery Espace, New Delhi, November 12-25). This water-colour master is in form with

these exquisite renderings of quotidian life in his home city—Calcutta.

DAMERALA RAMA RAO (CMC Gallery, New Delhi, November 14-December 5). From one of the pioneering Indian modern artists, comes a collection that has hardly left its home-town—

Rajamundhry in Andhra Pradesh. A must.

HIEROGLYPHS by Nalini Malani (Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay, November 19-28). The vivid works, mostly water-colours and acrylic on paper, trace the artist's evolution. Also two limited-edition books by the artist.

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AL BHI
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l station, a country home
beach cottage. Every
has been there. Strangely, with the same travelling
ession. A V.I.P. In fact, across families, across generations,
has meant nothing else. There's a simple reason why.
Of course, there's a lot that goes into making V.I.P.
luggage. Sturdy shells supported by a metal frame, for
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E HAPPY HOLIDAY LINE FROM V.I.P.

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Classy Rhythm

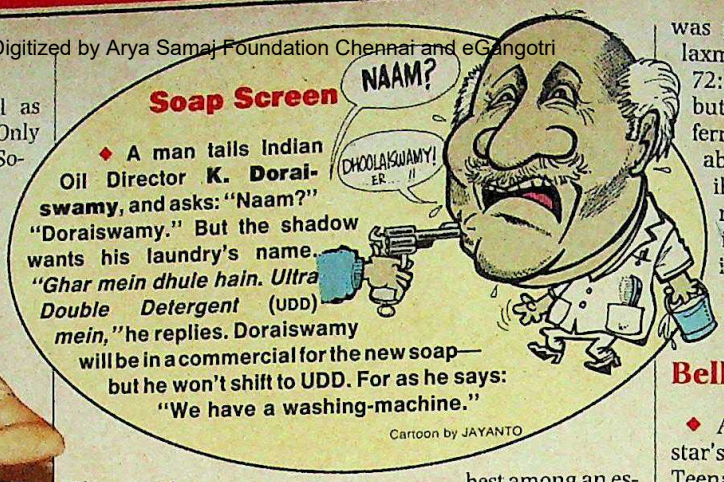
◆ He moves as well as Mikhail Baryshnikov. Only the steps are different. So-viet Bharatnatyam dancer **Dmitriy Zameyev**, 24, gave a scintillating performance of the *bhavas* of Duryodhana, Dharmaputra and Panchali. But his plans are as much in the air as the status of his country. Says he in chaste Hindi: "It's a new country now. But the people are the same." Maybe it's time to go back to the ballet and *pas de deux*.

Zameyev: different style

NAMAS BHOJANI

Sabharwal (above), and Panjabi: ethnic cuisine

Soap Screen



◆ A man tails Indian Oil Director **K. Doraiswamy**, and asks: "Naam?" "Doraiswamy." But the shadow wants his laundry's name. *"Ghar mein dhule hain. Ultra Double Detergent* (UDD) *mein,"* he replies. Doraiswamy will be in a commercial for the new soap—but he won't shift to UDD. For as he says: "We have a washing-machine."

Cartoon by JAYANTO

Exotic Eating

◆ Crumpets and curry may be oceans apart. But Chutney Mary, London's Anglo-Indian restaurant, has bridged the gap. Director of cuisine **Namita Panjabi** has added a dash of spice to the bland English fare to dish out some real sizzlers. Some samplers: Masala Roast Lamb and Spicy Salmon Kedgeree. And for those bitten by Anglophilia, there's even a Raj cottage pie. Curry Club selected Chutney Mary as the best among an estimated 7,000 restaurants serving Indian food in Britain. Haute cuisine has also crossed the wall. After Maxims in Beijing, now **Dummy Sabharwal** has set up a kebab-and-gravy outlet in Shanghai called The First India. Says Sabharwal: "The emphasis is on a fine dining experience." Seems like the curry eastern is finally here.

Ladies Only

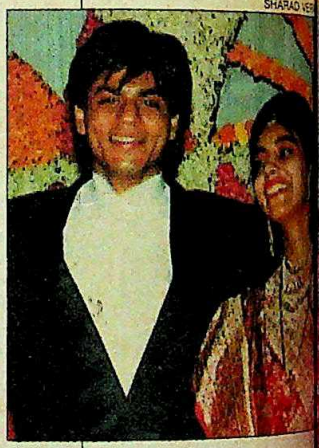
◆ The second sex never had it so good. The **Mylapore family** from Madras hasn't had a single male child in the last five generations. And they're not complaining. In fact, they're delighted. The oldest is Jayalaxmi, 88, and the youngest laxmi's daughter Shan 72: "We're not femin but we've always p ferred females." W about the men in the f ily? Well, they feel numbered. Not surp ing, as even all the d in the family are fem So much for the fa nine mystique.

The Mylapore women

Bells Chime

◆ Another small scre star's crossed the thresh Teenage rage **Shah Ru Khan** of teleserial *Fauji* fa married **Gauri Chhiba** fro Delhi. One of the weddi presents: the lead role in G. Sippy's *Raju Ban Gaya Gen*

SHARAD VE



Shah Rukh and Gauri

man. Obviously, he lea behind him a trail of brok hearts. "I don't think I broken hearts." But nobo seems to believe this.

SHYAM TE

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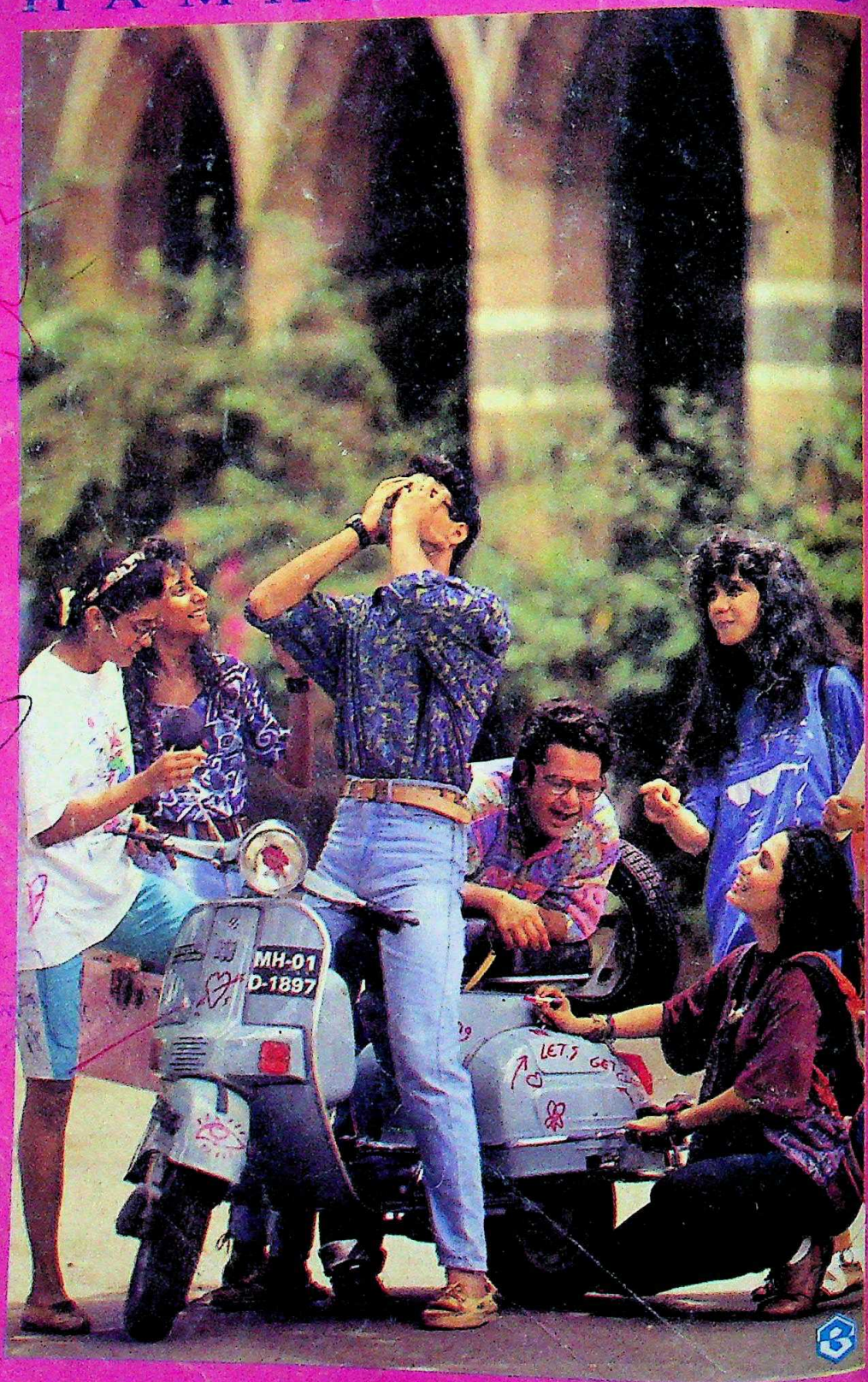
HAMARA BAJAJ



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INDIA TODAY
DECEMBER 15, 1991

V.P. SINGH: THAT SINKING FEELING

SIT PROBE: CONSPIRACY SURFACES

'QUESTIES': RAPIDLY SEEKING ENGLISH

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

LOSING DIRECTION

Hobbled by short-sighted and blundering diplomacy, India fails to take advantage of the momentous changes sweeping the world.

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Blundering Along

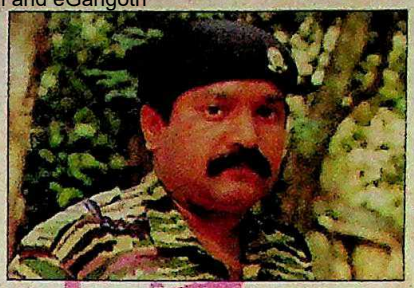
At a time when sure-footedness is required in foreign policy, Indian planners have been caught on the wrong foot. Instead of locking horns with the new challenges, there is an unprecedented drift in foreign policy with Indian diplomacy blundering on.

COVER STORY 24

The Party's Over

A bare two years after it was formed amidst immense euphoria, the National Front has disintegrated. The man who has taken the worst tumble in the process is V.P. Singh, whose Janata Dal is increasingly losing relevance and base. As for N.T. Rama Rao, he is back to his eccentric antics.

NATIONAL POLITICS 35



Conspiracy Surfaces

Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, investigations reveal, was only the first layer of an LTTE conspiracy larger than anyone had ever imagined. According to the SIT and 'Q' Branch of the Tamil Nadu Police, the Tigers were planning to form a greater *eelam* which included Tamil Nadu.

INVESTIGATION 57

Stealth Warriors

The Indian Navy's pride, the Marine Commando Force is an elite corps raised to conduct the most daring covert operations. The highly-trained secret warriors were kept under wraps for years. For the first time, an exclusive report on their intensive training and how they strike.

PHOTO FEATURE 96

Harvest of Sorrow

Over 30 lakh weavers in Andhra Pradesh are living in the shadow of hunger and death following subsidy cuts by the Centre and the state. Starvation has already claimed 60 lives while the rest wait in a total destitution for the state Government to lewd a helping hand.

SPECIAL FEATURE 89

Rapidly Seeking English

As more and more Indians—from puppies to politicians—aim for the *angrezi chhaap* to gain social acceptance, English speaking courses are doing booming business. Instrumental in this stuttering revolution is the self-help Rapidex book which has sold an amazing one crore copies.

SPECIAL FEATURE 149

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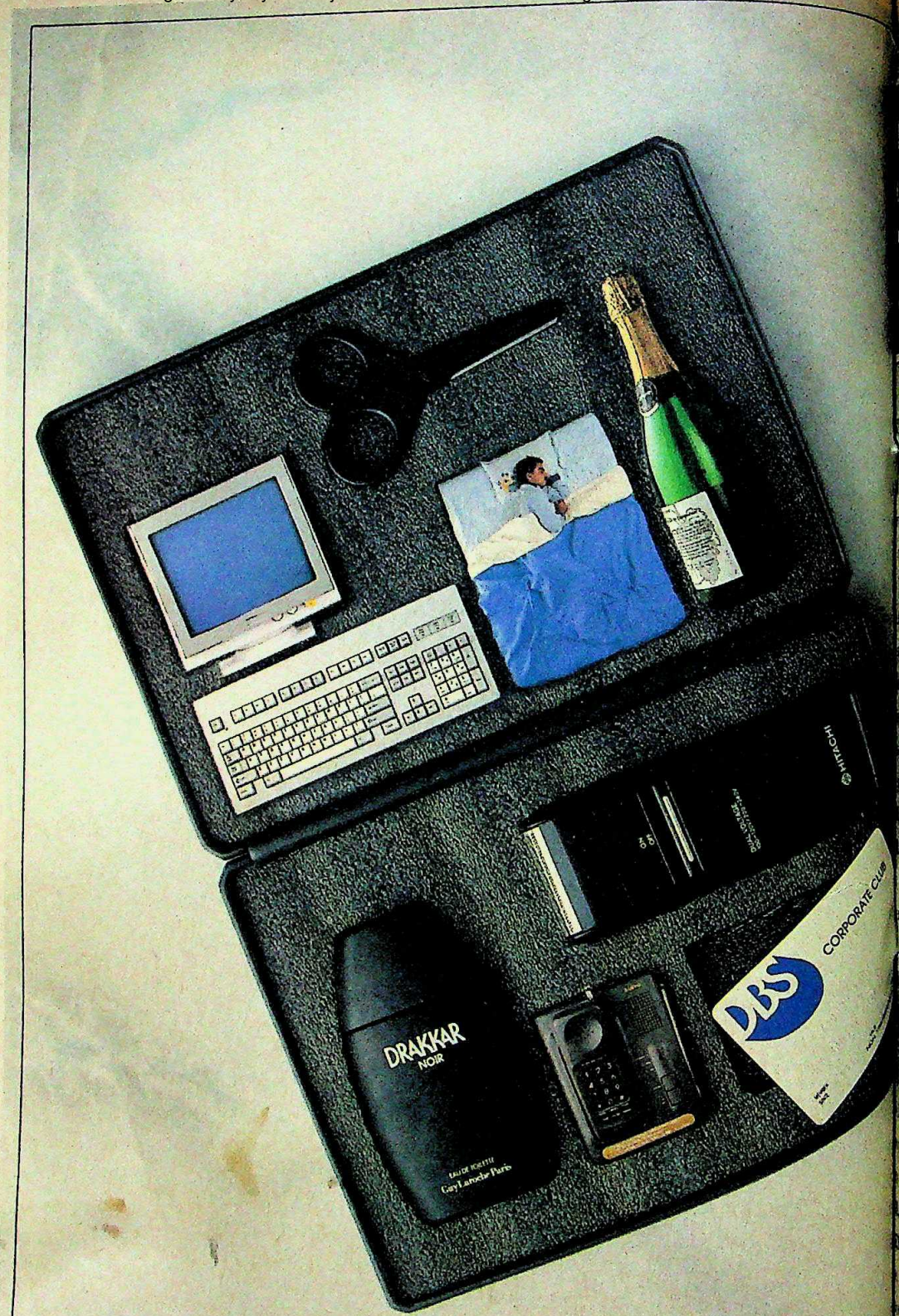

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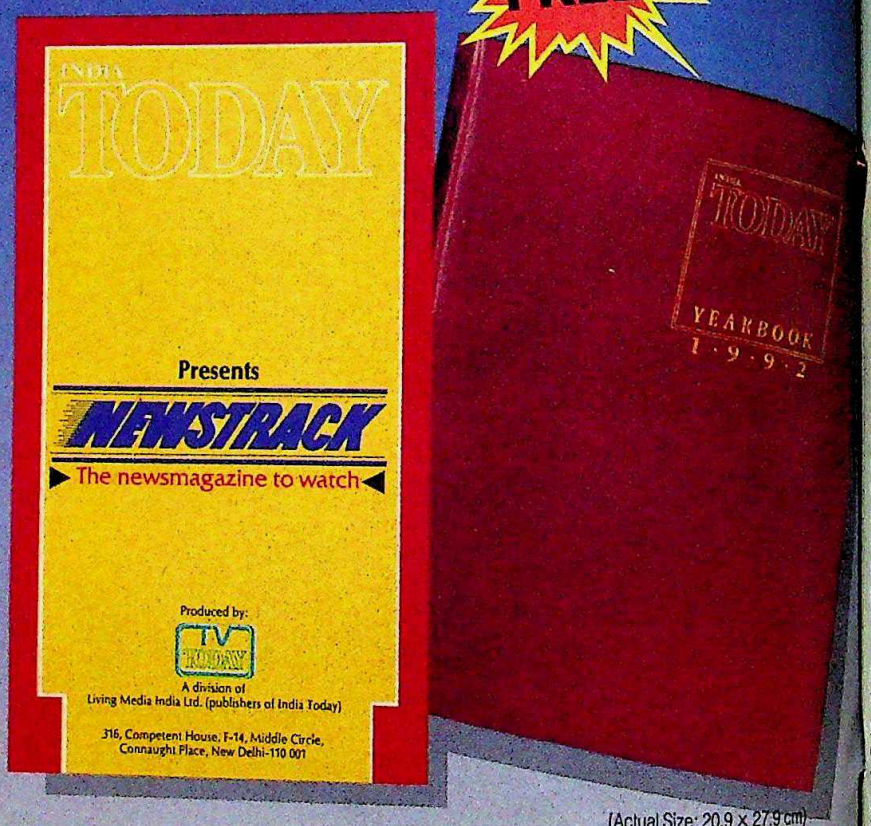

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CONTROVERSIAL COVER

We were quite astonished to see the cheap cover ("Cinema Turns Sexy", November 15). For a magazine comparable to *Time* and *Newsweek*, such photographs are unwarranted, unnecessary and obnoxious. All this will only end up tarnishing the good reputation the magazine has built up.

SUNIL and ALKA VAZE
New Delhi

■ As your magazine is informative, we encourage children to read it. But we cannot allow youngsters to read this issue because of its vulgar cover. I hope in future you will not publish such lewd photographs.

Lt-Colonel V.K. SHARMA
56 APO

■ We do not want sexiness to be home-delivered.

G. VIJAYAN RAO
Madras

■ Some 'blue' pages of INDIA TODAY are appreciated. But the earthquake should have been highlighted with a cover story.

Brother BENNY J.P.
Najibabad

■ I was initially surprised to see the cover story on cinema when other news stories were there to choose from. But after reading it, I found it worthy of attention. In recent years, film makers have been trying to sell their films using sex and violence. And now there is a new breed of actresses too who readily expose themselves on screen. However, most such films have not been box-office hits.

C.R. NAGENDRA
Bangalore

■ Your story was timely and thought-provoking. The worst aspect of such films is the havoc they wreak on the minds of young, impressionable children. The censor board and the Government must wake up from their slumber to tame this giant called vulgarity.

MANISH LAL SEHGAL
New Delhi

■ To make much of shirtless torsos of heroes in a country where most men go about shirtless, at home and at work, was ludicrous. On the whole, it was much ado about nothing.

K. GOPINATHAN
London

LIVING WITH EVIL

It is because of the absolutely useless policies of our successive governments that we have now arrived at such a pass ("Riding New Highs", November 15). Despite the detailed knowledge—including the facts and figures—of drug trafficking, we are unable to imagine a future free from this menace.

PUSHP RAJ
Jammu

RAISING A STORM

The response to the "Cinema Turns Sexy" cover story was quite overwhelming. Of the 68 letters received, 39 criticised it and seven praised it. Others just made observations. Many readers were outraged by INDIA TODAY 'stooping so low'. In accusing cinema of smuttiness, it committed the same sin to boost its sales, some said. Others thought we were encouraging violence against women. One reader even reminded us of our 'moral duty to society'. Meanwhile, another felt that in the land of the Kamasutra, censorship should be relaxed. Yet another wondered what the stir was about when steamier foreign stuff was available. Others were more interested in hot news—the earthquake, they said, should have been on the cover.

WHAT MEETING?

Do you know what the expanded form of CHOGM ("A New Awareness", November 15) is? It is 'Chiefs Holidaying On Government Money'.

KAMALJIT AHLUWALIA
Amritsar

SAD DECLINE

It is really sad to know that even Tagore's legacy, Santiniketan, which is known for its traditional way of life and untrammeled serenity, will become history if urban folk are allowed to convert it into a commercial concrete jungle ("An Idyll Invaded", November 15).

ARUP K. DUTTA
Bhagalpur

BIASED VIEW

In his review ("Half Truths", November 15) of my book, Kuldip Nayar has approached the subject with a pre-determined mind ignoring a mountain of evidence. I have cited a number of concrete cases, such as Nedous and Karal Sangari hotels (pages 234 and 235) and the local anti-defection law (page 237), to prove how Article 370 has been misused to prop up and perpetuate a corrupt and callous oligarchy. The example of Dr Rubeena Masrullah (page 238) amply illustrates how gross injustice is being done. And what have the 'liberal intellectuals' to say about the denial of elementary human rights to the displaced persons (pages 238-239)? We have deprived our own people, in our own country, of the basic right to vote in the state Assembly or municipality, or even to secure admission for their children in professional colleges.

About the 'protective custody' of Maulvi Farooq, Kuldip Nayar has also side-tracked facts mentioned on page 591. Similarly in Dr Farooq Abdullah's dismissal, Nayar avoids mentioning Dr Abdullah's own admission (pages 284-285) and B.K. Nehru's letter (page 294). Where was the justification for me to resign when Dr Abdullah was inconsistent in his

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VOLUME XVI NUMBER 23; FOR THE FORTNIGHT DECEMBER 1–15, 1991

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stand and had let down two governors (page 293)?

New Delhi — JAGMOHAN, former J&K governor

SMART MOVE

Sonia Gandhi has shown considerable maturity in calling the bluff of her late husband's hangers-on by refusing to enter politics ("Act of Maturity", November 15). She realises that their entreaties are aimed at helping them make up lost ground after the death of their mentor.

New Delhi — TARLOK SINGH

PLAYING AGAINST THE ODDS

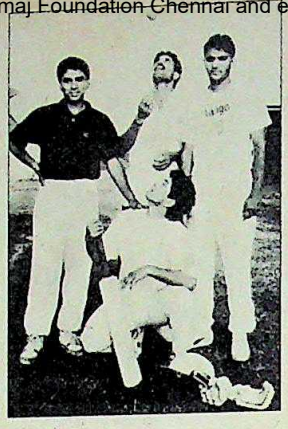
Recent experience has shown that the organisers feel that rules can be bent to suit Pakistan ("A Sharjah Diary", November 15). The game has become a farce there.

NOIDA — ROHIT RAJ

■ It was surprising to see the Indian team lose against Pakistan. It showed that the umpires had special rules for the Pakistani team. It was this disadvantage more than 'cracking under pressure' that led to defeat.

Baroda — PADMINI HAZARE

■ Your story missed the point. It is no use making Indians work together



The Sharjah Cup organisers and crowd are taking the Indian team for granted, not realising without India, there's no cricket in the desert. It's time to say: "Hell no, we won't go."

Ghaziabad — RAKESH SIMHA

endeavour, be it sports, industry or administration. The *paan* kiosk is more efficient than any large Indian enterprise. Not just Pakistan, anyone can overtake us.

Madras — K.R. RANGASWAMY

BAD CHOICE

It was disheartening to see that despite so many problems in India, you chose to do a cover story on cricket ("The Coming Bonanza", October 31). I expect your magazine to keep me informed about the important things in life, not the diversions.

Sao Paulo, Brazil — S.J. FREDDIE

■ Seeing the eye-catching cover photograph of our cricket stars, one's expectations soared. But one felt a little cheated after reading the story. It was a classic case of much ado about nothing.

Delhi — P.S. NARANG

A CLARIFICATION

The graphic representation of drug trafficking and profits generated in "Riding New Highs" (INDIA TODAY, November 15) was adapted from a model in B.V. Kumar's book *Preventive Detention Laws of India*.

—*Editor*

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dy has been there. Strangely, with the same travelling
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ggage has meant nothing else. There's a simple reason why.
st. Of course, there's a lot that goes into making V.I.P.
sting luggage. Sturdy shells supported by a metal frame, for
stance, ensure a toughness to withstand any kind of
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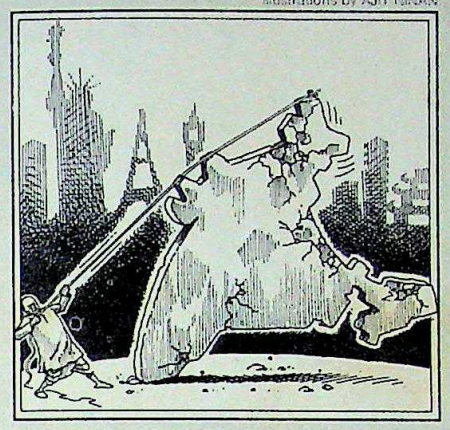
Desk Mentality

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN

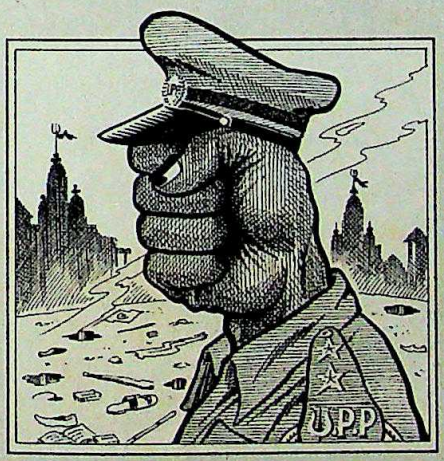


HAVING been cussedly Indo-centric for so long, with foreign policy conforming to ideology rather than reality, the politicians and bureaucrats running the country seem incapable of learning to think globally—of tailoring international changes to fit the country's vital interests.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's initial gaffe about the dangers that befall reformers who move too fast during the time of the aborted coup in the Soviet Union set the tone for what has followed. South Block simply has not been able to understand and react to the earth-shattering events that have followed the fall of communism in the USSR. The wall-to-wall spectacle of the Indians caught non-plussed by what the foreign office called an "anti-Indian" vote by the Soviet Union on declaring Asia a nuclear-free zone; Foreign Minister Madhavsinh Solanki's visit to Russia to chat with Boris Yeltsin, at which the two barely knew what to say to each other; the near fiasco at SAARC in which Indo-Sri Lankan relations hit rock bottom, created the impression of India being an international bumbler.

And the impression is not without foundation. The difference today is that the USSR, or what's left of it, is reacting in its own interests according to changes sweeping the world. India is still imagining 'blocs'. In an era in which nuclear non-proliferation has universal backing, it is pointless to simply emit fits of moral pique. Instead, India should have anticipated that with Moscow's changed outlook in which blind support for India on the non-proliferation issue made no sense, India's knee-jerk intransigence would only isolate it in the eyes of the world as a nuclear renegade. Ironically, Pakistan, by making the nuclear-free zone proposal, scored a diplomatic triumph where it should not have. Its own nuclear intentions are suspect in the eyes of the world, especially the US. This is a time when Pakistan's relations with the US have nosedived. It has been denied aid, is no longer considered a strategic frontline state vital to US interests, and a growing body of opinion in Washington favours putting Pakistan on the list of countries aiding and abetting terrorism. This is a golden opportunity for New Delhi—in the interest of its own domestic concerns, Kashmir and Punjab—to seize the moment and force world events in its favour by taking radical strides. But the Government has still to demonstrate a new gameplan or originality of action.

Sin of Omission



IN view of the still-lingering communal tensions ignited by the controversial land-acquisition around the Babri Masjid, it is incumbent on state governments to take extra precautionary measures on occasions of religious ceremonies to prevent violent clashes. But just the opposite was in evidence last fortnight in Varanasi where 19 people died in week-long violence, when frenzied mobs went on bloodthirsty killing sprees.

Even the death of one person in such clashes should be cause for national shame. But what is equally shocking is the casual way in which the administration behaved. The routine ritual of the immersion of Durga idols in the Ganges has never caused communal strife in the city. Nonetheless, as a traditional precautionary measure, the procession has always been escorted by Central and PAC forces. This time—notwithstanding the heat generated by Ayodhya—there were only a few sub-inspectors and a handful of constables in escort. And this, despite repeated requests for more protection by the Nav Sangh Club, the organiser of the procession. The trouble started when a rebel group of this club, led by a BJP corporator, began an unscheduled display of fireworks while the procession passed through a Muslim locality amid vocal protests from the residents. The small police force was helpless. The way it always happens, the rumour-mongers were out in full force alleging that Muslims were killing Hindus. Again, the familiar nightmare was relived. Innocents being butchered in cold blood as they came out of shops or cinema theatres.

Even though stray incidents of violence kept recurring for five days after the initial outburst, the Government, for unexplained reasons, relaxed the curfew. Once again, organised gangs of killers descended on innocents and blood spilled on the streets in a prolonged free-for-all with little or no police intervention.

This is yet another frightening and sickening chapter in the periodic communal blood-letting that has blemished the soul of the country. And the Uttar Pradesh Government has compounded its errors of omission by allowing only BJP MP Shrish Dixit to visit the curfew-bound town while refusing permission to politicians of other political parties. This demonstrates a partisan attitude towards communal violence and does little to enhance the BJP's image as a party striving for moderation of centrist politics.

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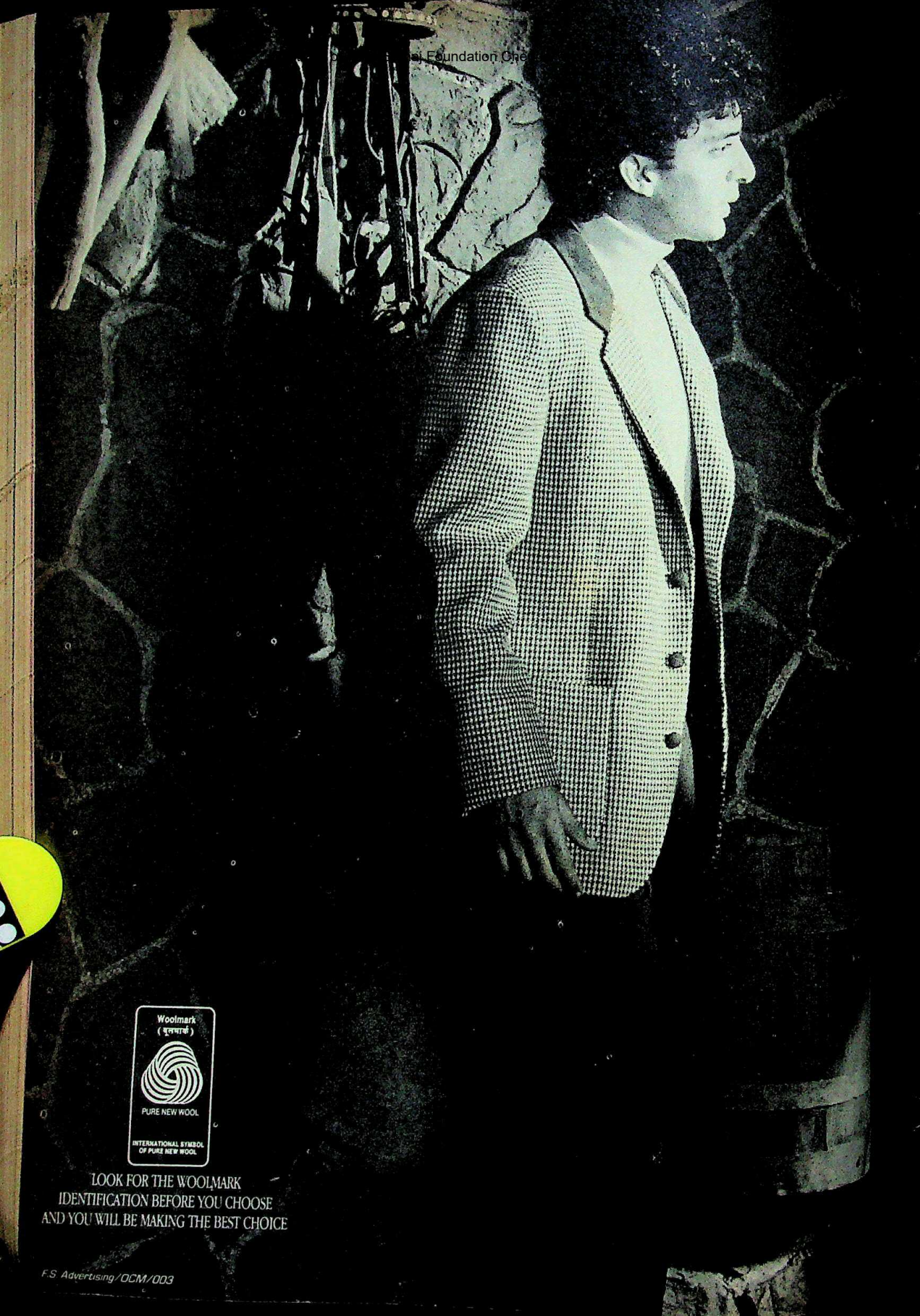

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Angry Appeal

● Aggrieved journalists usually take their woes to the police, the law courts or the Press Council. But what provokes them to write to the prime minister? Open threats

of violence by the prime minister's so-called friends.

In a letter to P.V. Narasimha Rao, Rajat Sharma, editor of Bombay's *Daily*, alleged that lawyer Pinaki Mishra, a Chandra Swami aide, "criminally assaulted me and used abusive language" at a dinner hosted by cricketer Kapil Dev. "As Mr Mishra was about to hit me on the head, Mr Prabhu Chawla, executive editor of the *Indian Express*...intervened in the matter. But for Mr Chawla, my life would have been in danger."

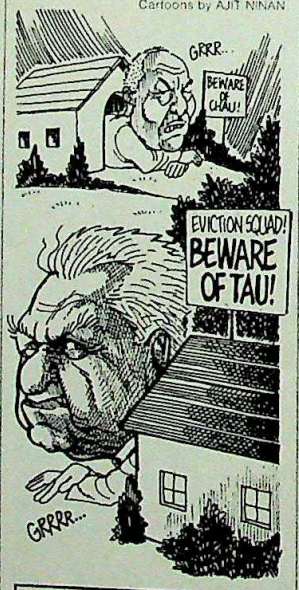
Mishra, nephew of former chief justice Ranganath Mishra and son of Assam Governor Loknath Mishra, apparently took exception to certain articles in the *Daily* about him and Chandra Swami. According to the letter, Mishra described the godman as the prime minister's special friend, called Sharma a snake, and threatened to crush him. The matter may have died a silent death if it wasn't for the dramatis personae. Mishra was strongly tipped to become Officer on Special Duty in the PMO, before his appointment was shot down.

Sitting Pretty

● Devi Lal has finally moved his assorted cattle out of prestigious Willingdon Crescent, his official residence as deputy prime minister, and sent them back home to Sirsa, Haryana. He has also removed himself to a more humble bungalow on Tughlak Road.

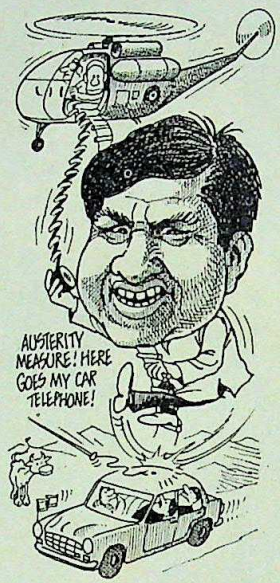
But the question is, why has the Tau been given an official house at all when he is not even a member of Parliament? His aides say it is because he is a freedom fighter. But then, how about son Om Prakash Chautala? Chautala ceased to be a Rajya Sabha member almost two years ago. Still, he sits pretty in a handsome house in the capital's elite Shahjahan Road area.

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



Fickle Claims

● An economy drive in government seems to be on. Minister of State for Environment Kamal Nath, for instance, recently announced that he does not want to be



greeted with garlands. Not to be outdone in cutting costs and ostentation, Minister of State for Communications Rajesh Pilot, has relinquished his car telephone. His argument: since ministers spend little time in their cars, the enormously expensive cellular telephones are a wasteful expenditure.

But evidently, consistency is not the communication minister's strong point. When it comes to attending kisan rallies, austerity is not a consideration. If anything, the minister does not hesitate to take a 10-minute airplane or helicopter ride for a kisan rally in neighbouring Haryana when he could just as well drive there. And that too, much more cheaply.

Plot Failure

● Union Petroleum Minister B. Shankaranand is realising just how much difficulty the common man faces from government agencies. Shankaranand, who hails from Karnataka and is among the seniormost members of Parliament, chose Bangalore as the place he would like to retire to after long years in the capital's political minefield.

But he decided against using any political influence to buy land. So he wrote to the chairman of the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), the agency that allots plots to citizens, requesting it for a plot anywhere in the city. He also mentioned that he was instrumental in sanctioning additional water

supply schemes to Bangalore when he was Union minister for water resources. And that since he had helped the state in other matters as well, his request should be considered seriously.

It has been six months since. But the minister has not even got an acknowledgement from the BDA chairman's office, never mind a housing site.

TAIL PIECE

Former Coffee Board official V. Balu at a recent international symposium: "Coffee is not a popular after-lunch drink with Indian government officers. It keeps them awake in the afternoon!"

OVERHEARD

With D.P. Yadav and Madan Bhaiya winning assembly elections from behind bars, the SJP should be called the Samajwadi Jail Party.

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• *People assemble on my call and not on the Janata Dal's.*
■ RAM VILAS PASWAN, in *Surya India*

• *Shot by a Khalistani terrorist, I would become a martyr to the cause of a united India.* ■ KHUSHWANT SINGH, on his death, in *The Telegraph Magazine*

• *Dawood Ibrahim is a vastly overrated man. If he comes back to Bombay, we will send him packing to the lock-up immediately.*
■ S. RAMAMURTHY, police commissioner, Bombay, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

• *Pakistan is in a deep financial and political crisis. At this juncture, they cannot even contemplate a military offensive against us.*
■ SHARAD PAWAR in *The Sunday Times of India*

• *Jyoti Basu has made the police eunuchs during his regime.*
■ SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY in *Indian Express*

• *Rajiv Gandhi posthumously would do better than Rajiv Gandhi alive.*
■ SATISH SHARMA in *The Statesman*

• *The prosperous may be surprised to see Laloo Prasad Yadav travelling in a helicopter. Are we (the backward classes) born to ride on the back of buffaloes all our lives?*
■ LALOO PRASAD YADAV in *The Telegraph*

• *I am bullish, the finance minister is conservative.*
■ P. CHIDAMBARAM in *Organiser*

• *This Madhavrao could not get along with his mother. How can he get along with his motherland?*
■ BAL THACKERAY in *Onlooker*

• *We lost, but the occasion was the winner.*
■ ALI BACHER in *The Hindustan Times*

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SIMIAN MONK

■ Piety pays. Although only in afterlife. And the death, last fortnight, of an elderly monkey, who prayed regularly every morning at a Shiva temple in New Delhi for nearly a decade, certainly proved the point. What with at least 20,000 people turning out for the last rites of this pious creature.

Over the years, people had got used to the quotidian sight of the monkey swinging down from his arboreal abode to the nearby temple and offering his prayers to the lord with folded hands. And for all his devout deeds people in the neighbourhood gave him an emotional farewell when his soul departed—complete with all the necessary rites and rituals. The monkey's body was washed in holy water and then taken in a procession from Paharganj to the Yamuna river, where it was immersed. Certainly a good Hindu even after its very last mortal moments.

RAVENOUS REVENGE

■ The way to strike at a man is through the stomach. Or at least that's what a group of college students did in Trichur after the staff of a local restaurant rubbed them the wrong way. They returned with revenge. In the form of a man famous for his gargantuan appetite, and bought him 'full meal' ticket for just Rs 25.

Over the next two hours, the food fiend chomped away voraciously. And he certainly got much more than his money's worth—by the end of it he had steadily worked his way through *idlis* and *chappatis* worth Rs 875. Furious at being forced to eat humble

pie, the hotel manager sent for the police. At which point the man picked up his paunch and left.

The hotel, meanwhile, scared of an epidemic of empty larders, has put up warning notices in its branches in Trivandrum and Irinjalakuda. But that's like closing the sty after the hog has got out.

SKATING SUCCESS

■ An Indian rayon company has found a speedy short-cut to produce more rolls of rayon. In its Philippines plant, workers have been provided with roller skates so that they can move up and down the assembly line on a faster track.

Therefore, unlike their Indian counterparts, who apparently complain about handling more than one machine because of the vast distances they have to traverse, the Filipinos race through their work on 10 different machines without a murmur.

But the company is not ready to fabricate similar moves in India. When questioned about importing the skates, the company's management shrugs its shoulders. The first thing the workers will demand, they explain—that is if they don't strike work because of unacceptable automation—is a skating allowance. Now that's something that is impossible to roll back or skate over.

THE LAST BID

■ The stakes were high. But, for this man from Allahabad, the sky was the limit. Having gambled away his last paisa, he desperately fished through his pockets. Only to triumphantly hold up a crumpled piece of paper before the other players huddled around the table.

As he lay the paper on the table, the players gaped in amazement. For right before their very eyes was a bank draft for a stupendous Rs 15.50 lakh.

But even before the dice could roll again, the local police had arrived on the scene. Swooping down on

the den, they arrested the daring gambler. The reason: the draft he was betting on had in fact been given to him by his employer to deliver to the Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation.

The intrepid gambler didn't just lose the shirt off his back—in the bargain he even lost his job.

CHANCE REUNION

■ The epistolary art has its uses even in this age of computer contact. So a university lecturer from Pune discovered recently. Scanning through the letters column of a Marathi daily, he suddenly stopped. For, buried within the reams of agitated citizens' grouses was a familiar name.

It happened to be his brother's. Nothing unusual about that. Except, the brother had run away from home back in 1974 after failing the secondary school examination. And had been incommunicado ever since.

Soon, the two brothers were reunited. In the meantime, the younger brother had married and had three daughters. But fatherhood hadn't eased his adolescent anxieties about parental disapproval. Still afraid for what he couldn't accomplish 17 years ago, he hasn't met his father yet. Some filial fear, that.

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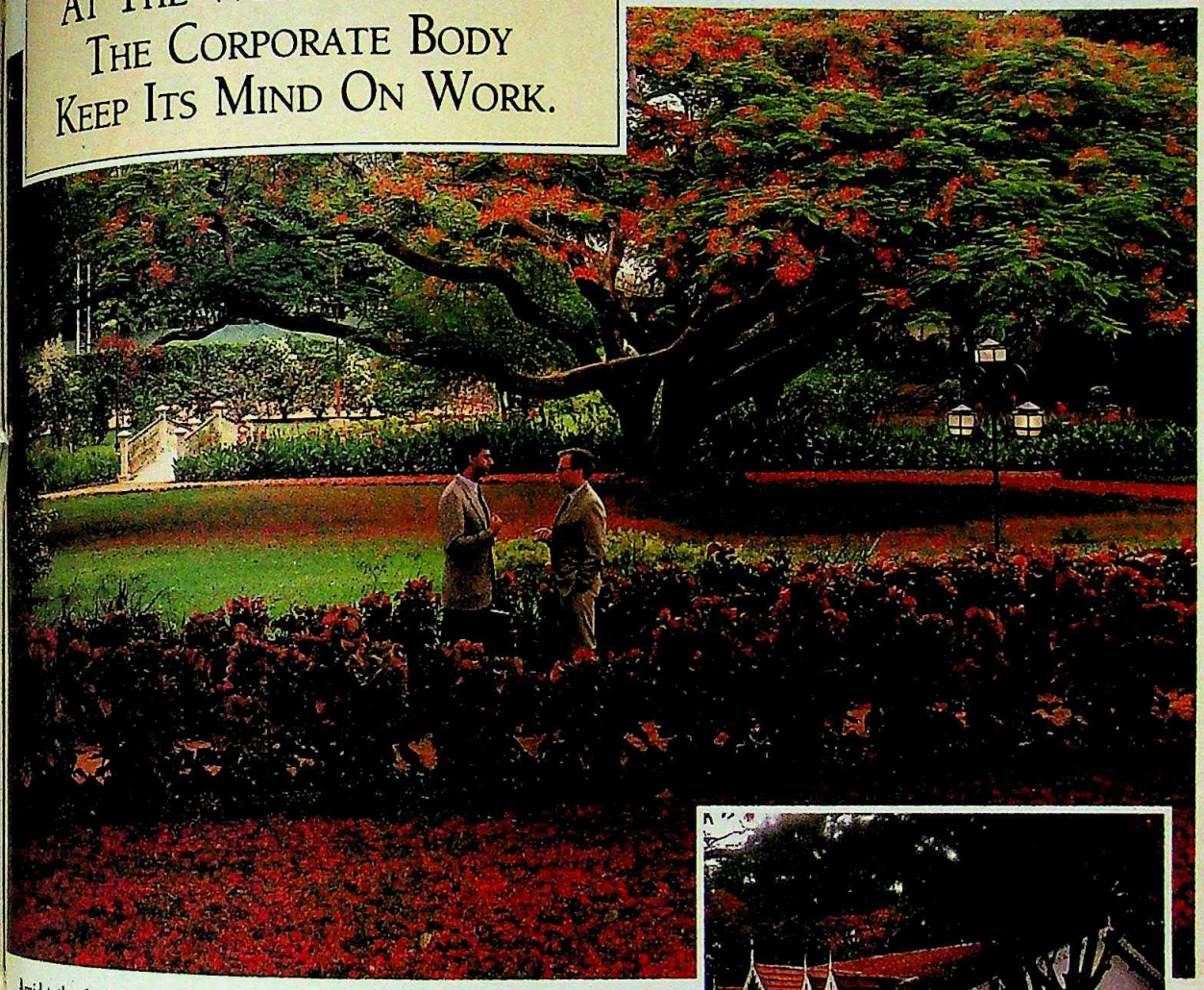
How A 20-Acre Garden At The West End Helps The Corporate Body Keep Its Mind On Work.



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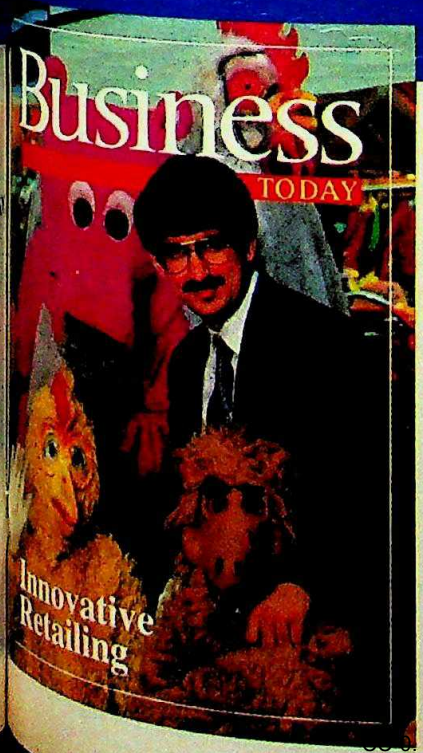

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BLUNDERING

By SHEKHAR GUPTA with SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

TO even a seasoned and shrewd external affairs minister, the view of the world from the window of his South Block office looks bewildering. It's a world literally coming apart and reshaping itself. Where ideological barriers are crumbling, maps are being redrawn, and power equations being rewritten. Where old friends are no longer strategic allies and where superpowers, no more rivals, are feverishly forging super alliances. It's also a world where several nations with whom India has had close ties are coming out of a four-decade deep-freeze to discover that old viruses of ethnic and political strife are still alive. It's a world where Indian policy-makers have to quickly unlearn old wisdom and move ahead.

The problem with Madhavsinh Solanki, the diminutive, ever-smiling external affairs minister, is not that he is not seasoned or shrewd. The problem is, he seems so overawed by the enormity of his task that the bubbling, enterprising player of Gujarat politics has become a diffident interlocutor in the Foreign Ministry at a time when it needs dynamic and decisive leadership. Willy-nilly, he has come to personify the new faltering and bumbling image of Indian diplomacy.

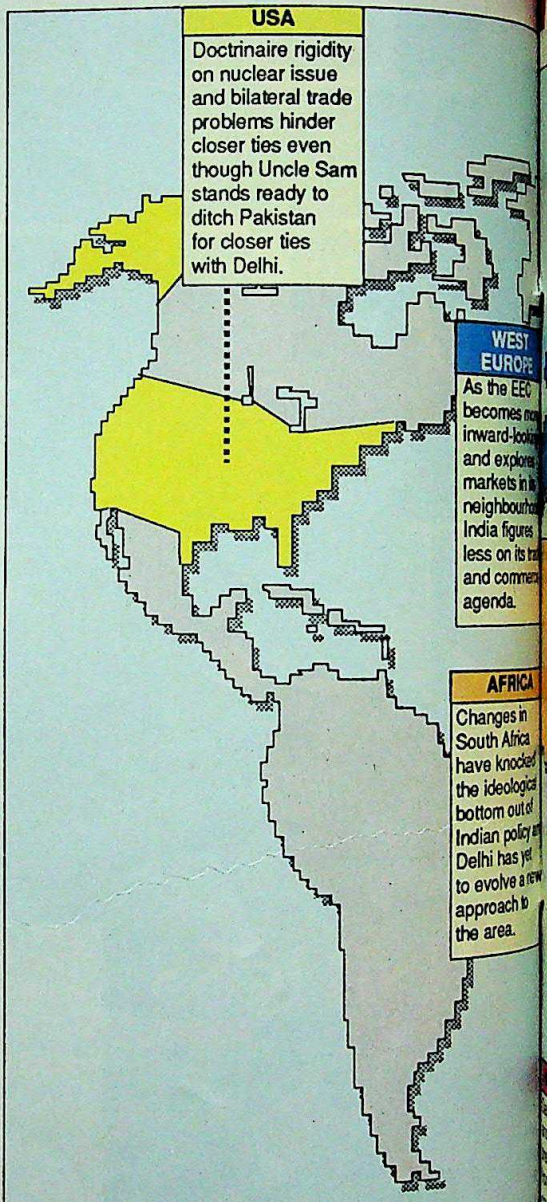
THE GAFFE PARADE

Crucial Juncture, Disastrous Confusion

BEGINNING with Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's immortal homily to "over-enthusiastic reformers" on the day of the abortive coup in Moscow, the last three months have seen an unprecedented degree of drift in foreign policy. Last month, India earned the scorn of its neighbours by scuttling the SAARC summit in Colombo, a clumsy move veiled in the most transparent of protocol garbs. As former external affairs minister I.K. Gujral says: "We handed a readymade dish to Pakistan to abuse us." Then came the shock of the Soviet Union voting on the Pakistan-sponsored resolution to declare South Asia a nuclear-free zone, much against India's entreaties. Recoiling in confusion, South Block made itself the laughing stock of the world diplomatic community by protesting its 'anguish' from the rooftops.

Such bungles, rather than the finesse for which South Block has been known, mark India's record under the Rao Government. "To the US, you seem to be a country that does not know its mind, to the Soviets, a country that refuses to accept new realities, and to neighbours, a cussed bully," charges a senior New Delhi-based western diplomat.

With visits of three important foreign dignitaries—Chinese Premier Li Peng, Nepalese Prime Minister G.P. Koirala, and probably Russian President Boris Yeltsin—scheduled in the next three weeks, J.N. Dixit, the new foreign secretary, rates this as one of the four most crucial phases in India's foreign



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ALONG

EAST EUROPE
The recently de-Marxified countries searching for trade and technology from anywhere but South block are still unable to disentangle from the currency conversion tangle.

SOVIET UNION
India is unable to shake the power bloc hangover, and display the nimblefootedness to match a rapidly changing scenario.

CHINA
Indecision over the boundary dispute hinders improved economic and political ties with the bamboo dragon which is now seeking normalcy.

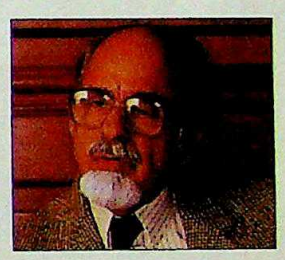
ASIAN TIGERS
Even as Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, surge ahead rapidly on the economic front, India figures nowhere in their global gameplan.

PAKISTAN
Unable to isolate Islamabad in world opinion even though the West and US look askance at Pakistan's nuclear intentions and support for terrorism.

NEIGHBOURS
Sri Lanka, Bangladesh continue to view Delhi as the Big Bully, especially after the recent SAARC fiasco.

...But lack of political direction and diplomatic foresight have reduced India to a mere bystander, unable to seize the advantage.

"This is one of the most crucial foreign policy turning points in independent India's history."
J.N. DIXIT
Foreign Secretary



"By scuttling the SAARC summit, we have given Pakistan a readymade dish for India-bashing."
I.K. GUJRAL, ***Former external affairs minister***

"Our foreign policy is completely ignoring security interests."
BRAJESH MISHRA, ***Former diplomat and BJP member***

Map by PRANAB DUTTA

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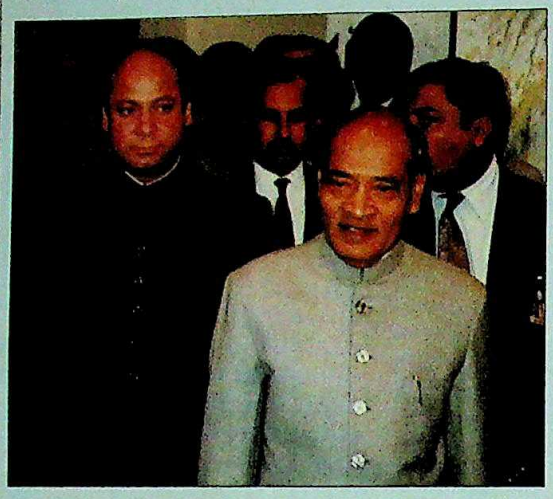
DAMAGE CONTROL

- It is illogical for India to destroy a forum of its own creation.
- Forget petty piques and seek leadership through SAARC.

SAARC



India is yet to take any bilateral initiatives

policy since 1947 *(see box)*. This is when India needed diplomatic surefootedness. But it does not seem to know which way to look or walk. The end of the Cold War has knocked the bottom out of non-alignment. Says former defence minister K.C. Pant: "The old coordinates are suddenly gone and we seem to be groping for direction. We seem to be reacting rather than taking the initiative."

The result of reactive diplomacy, predictably, is gaffes. Sources in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) put the blame on the "utter lack of direction at the political level". The ministry is weighed down by an ineffective and inarticulate foreign minister in Solanki *(see interview)*. Worse, he has an inconsequential deputy in Eduardo Faleiro. The prime minister himself, despite his long experience in the field of foreign policy, seems to have given it low priority. Sources disclose that Rao has not had time to respond to MEA's suggestions for bilateral initiatives on the nuclear issue vis-a-vis Pakistan though the files have been lying on his desk for nearly five months. For almost three months now, he has not had time to discuss India's approach to the border problem when Li Peng comes next fortnight. He has even been oblivious to the flaming row among the bureaucracies of the MEA, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Sources close to Rao say his priority is the resurrection of the Indian economy. Disdainful of the fanfare and summitry of the Rajiv years and disgusted with the blunderings of his last two predecessors on the domestic front, the prime minister is reported to have stated that his goal is to pull the economy out of the red and to "wipe the tear from every Indian eye".

MADHAVSINH SOLANKI

A Square Peg in a Round Hole

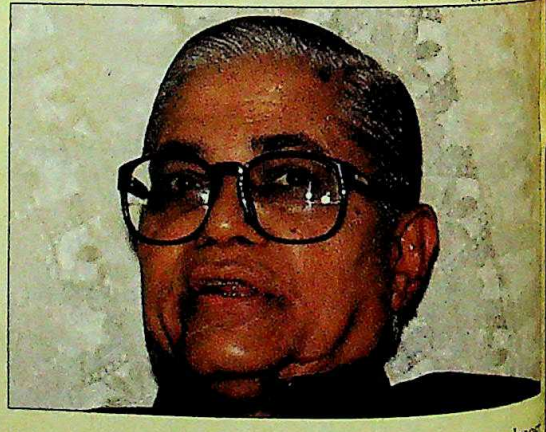
THOSE who know him from his halcyon days in Gujarat politics remember him for his wit, his extroverted demeanour, affable personality, wide repertoire of Urdu couplets and, above all, for his supreme confidence. But put the same Madhavsinh Solanki in the External Affairs Ministry and he is reduced to the very antithesis of all this. A diffident, shy and unsure politician, treading gingerly on unfamiliar terrain.

In state politics, he was a shrewd player. He created the famous theory of KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim) vote-banks which stood his party in good stead and, for a while, left the opposition completely without direction. Handling foreign affairs, however, he sometimes seems like a man whom time has passed by. Solanki's only positive contribution seems to be his very Gujarati understanding of money and business matters and he has helped give the country's economic diplomacy a headstart. But at the level of political diplomacy, he has unfortunately projected the image of a supplicant.

Though occupying the high-profile position for over five months now, Solanki has maintained remarkable anonymity, deliberately keeping away from the press and the limelight. But last fortnight, he agreed to meet Senior Editor SHEKHAR GUPTA and Principal Correspondent SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR, just prior to his meeting with the visiting US Under Secretary of State Reginald Bartholomew in the Parliament Building.

The interview began with Solanki handing over a copy of written answers to the questions his staff had requested INDIA TODAY to send in advance. The minister was obviously ill-at-ease answering questions in person and insisted that

SHARAD SAXENA



the written answers be read first. In the low-key, almost defensive manner that has become his hallmark in the Ministry of External Affairs, Solanki answered some crucial questions, showing a touching, if outdated, loyalty to old cliches and platitudes like the non-aligned movement (NAM), North-South relations and the nuclear question. Some of his views:

On the changing world:

Yes, the world has changed a great deal. There is a great deal of change. We have made some very basic changes in

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On the face of it, it would be unreasonable to fault that. ...rasimha Rao has to fine-tune his relations with interna... ...nal lending agencies, the US, and other powerful global ...nomies. There is thus more talk of "integration with the ...bal economic system" and less self-righteous haranguing ...inst the "imperialistic militaristic designs" of the Wicked ...st. Through a significant juxtaposition of international ...tors, India finds the situation surprisingly well-suited to its ...n interests. The break-up of the Soviet communist system ...s made the West fearful of a similar inevitability in China ...t that gives India its old balancing position in Asia. Again, ...end of the Cold War and waning US interest in Afghanistan ...s made Pakistan relatively inconsequential to the West ...ch also shares India's concern over growing Islamic ...damentalism. The US thus sees in India a long-term ...tegic partner in a volatile region. South Block is aware of ...s but the problem is converting awareness into policy.

NUCLEAR OBSTINACY

Expedient Policy, Disastrous Articulation

THE nuclear issue is the prime example. Last fortnight, ...plomatic activity on this peaked, first, with the Pakistan-...nsored vote at the UN to declare South Asia a nuclear-free ...e, with discussions with Iran for the supply of a 10-mW ...search reactor, and with the visit of US Under Secretary of ...e Reginald Bartholomew. In all three cases, India ended up ...ecting itself as an unreasonable and nuclear-ambitious

CHANGING EQUATIONS

- **Recast ties with the Soviet Union, focusing on economics.**
- **Accept Soviet inability to guard Indian interests anymore.**

The now ousted Pankin met Solanki in Moscow

...licy. Military blocs have disappeared, new economic ...wer centres have come up, new relationships between ...rth and South, developed and developing countries, new ...ional groups and regroupings have taken place in ...w years. And major events have taken place even in the ...viet Union.

"NAM is not a thing of the past. After long deliberations at Accra, we have concluded that NAM is more relevant than ever before."

On India's role in the new world order:

I don't agree that NAM is a thing of the past. The end of the ...d War has, in fact, vindicated our faith in peaceful co-...stence. At the recent conference in Accra, after long ...liberations, we have concluded that NAM is more relevant ...an ever before. New adjustments are very important. ...ere are economic groups. So we said the Security Council ...uld be restructured, it should have more members—...t should only five members take decisions? The structure ...uld be strengthened, made more dynamic. Five members ...re put there after the Second World War. Now that ...uation has changed. We also want the proceedings of the ...urity Council to be made more open.

But why would anybody listen to India?

The voice of 133 developing countries can at least create ...bal opinion. Most of these countries are poor and ...ward. They expect India to speak up for them. We have ...ken up the cause of poor countries—they deserve and need help for development. For removal of poverty, economic development is necessary. We can help bring about peace. For example, at the Harare CHOGM, the developed countries wanted to link aid to good governance, but we opposed it. There is no accepted definition of good governance. There is a new arrogance on the part of donor countries. The prime minister of Malaysia also pointed out the western biases.

Then why do third world countries not reciprocate India's support at international forums?

Today, many countries are taking the American line. Even third world countries do not have identical views. Many of them are also dependent on the West.

On the Soviet vote:

"The UN vote is not a defeat for India. Many countries abstained, including several from Western Europe who support our stand."

It is wrong to call it a defeat for India. More countries than usual abstained this time—as many as 23. This included a large number of developed European countries who support our position. We will go on explaining our positions. Besides, the Soviet vote was anticipated. They had informed us about it in advance and had made it clear that this would in no way affect our relations.

Why then rush to Moscow to express anguish?

We have to tell them about it. We brought everything to their notice.

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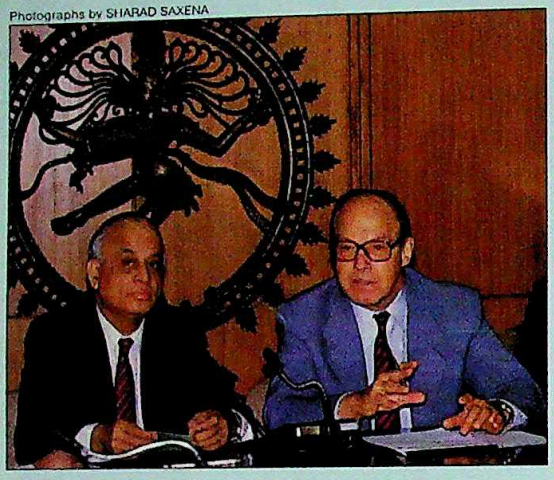
TOUGHNESS WITH TACT

- Moralising on NPT will isolate India in the world forums.
- Replace reactive diplomacy with initiatives on Pakistan.

Photographs by SHARAD SAXENA



IAEA Chief Blix and US Under Secretary Bartholomew warned India but didn't insist on the NPT

country. The reason: reactive diplomacy.

Significantly, rather than show India the dotted line, Bartholomew made it clear that the US understood India's compulsions on the NPT. But he said the US needed India to make the "right kind of noises" on the nuclear question: not helping other nations go nuclear, avoiding nuclear tests and expressing the willingness to work for nuclear detente within the region. It is a paradox that, instead, the fortnight was dominated by absolutely contrary noises in the proposed reactor sale to Iran. While there is merit in the Indian contention that the sale of a mere 10 mW reactor to a country bound by the NPT is no cause for concern, the timing of the move was faulty. "It was clever to open up to Iran for economic and political reasons and to outflank Pakistan. But you could have waited," says a senior western diplomat.

Even within the subcontinent, India was outmanoeuvred by Pakistan at the UN when the Soviets, along with Ukraine and Byelorussia, voted in favour of the Pakistani resolution. India has some fairly tenable objections. Non-inclusion of China and presence of nuclear armed ships and submarines in the Indian Ocean. But by failing to articulate that position, India looked like an obstructionist country. As Brajesh Mishra, former Indian envoy to the UN and a senior BJP member, says: "It is a shame that we have not been able to convince the international community of the farce of a nuclear capable country like Pakistan pushing for a nuclear-free zone in the region." For a long time now, analysts have pushed for India to take the initiative on confidence-building measures with Pakistan. But the leadership has found no time for it, reducing Indian diplomacy on this sensitive issue to stodgily defending the old ramparts.

Frozen in time, India still looks to the Soviet Union for support despite the fact that Moscow completely shares the American view on non-proliferation. In the past they have abstained from voting on South Asian issues out of bilateral concerns for India. This time, they informed India well in advance that they were opting out of this degree of bilateralism and would vote for the resolution. That makes the Indian "anguish" even more of an over-reaction, much to the Soviets' irritation. The Soviet view, as conveyed to Solanki in Moscow is: "The new Soviet Union is no longer the guardian of all your interests."

OUTDATED PERSPECTIVES

Long On Nostalgia, Short On Reality

SOVIET sources express exasperation at India's lingering nostalgia for "the good old days" of the Cold War—when Mrs Gandhi could ask Leonid Brezhnev for five million tonnes of crude at a banquet table, and get it. Complains a Soviet analyst: "India continues to look at the world from the eyes of the Soviet Union of 10 years ago."

Solanki's Moscow visit and India's belated approach to Yeltsin raised further questions. First of all, India showed pragmatism in making Solanki meet Yeltsin as an envoy of the prime minister and Mikhail Gorbachev as a mere foreign minister. The distinction was noted in Moscow. But Yeltsin was abrupt and wanted India to sign a treaty directly with him, decisively acknowledging Russia as the rightful inheritor to the power and position of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin and the new Russian leadership seem to have a poor understanding of India and India has done little to remedy that. Shockingly, it was the first time an Indian official met Yeltsin after the coup. Ignoring Yeltsin all this while, before and after the coup, is one of MEA's greatest failures. Analysts blame it on a nostalgic commitment to the Kremlin old guard. Having been so close to the Soviets, India should have had a better sense of the impending changes. But knowing that a united, Communist USSR was in India's long-term interest, the MEA became a prisoner of wishful thinking.

Confusion on the Soviet front is only matched by bloody-

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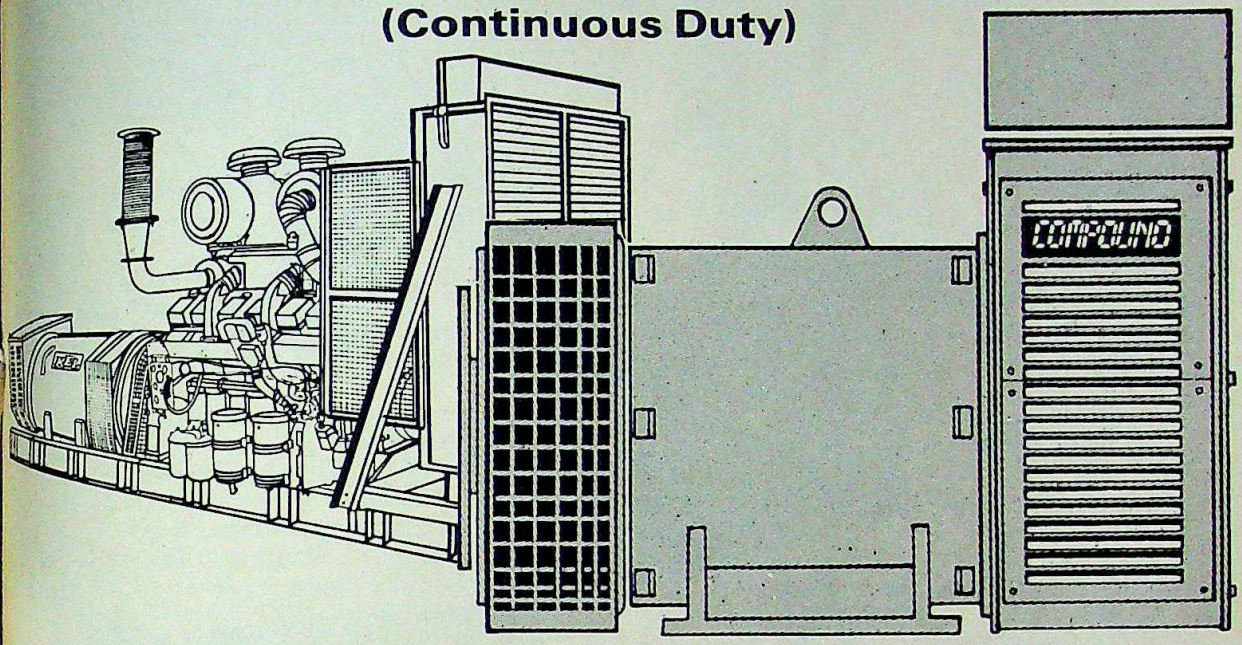

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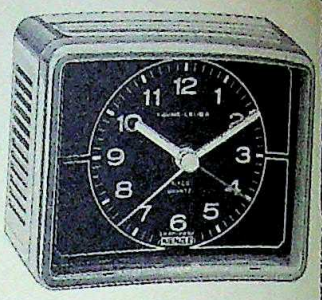

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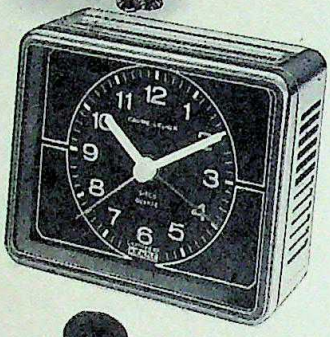

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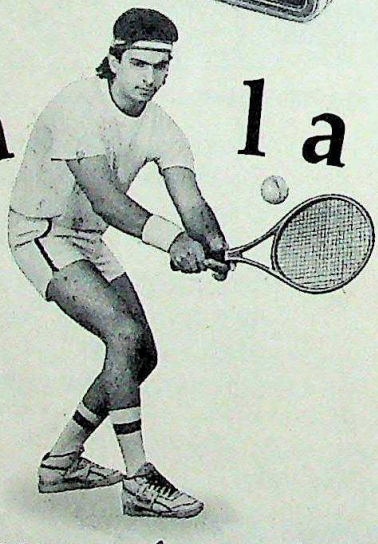

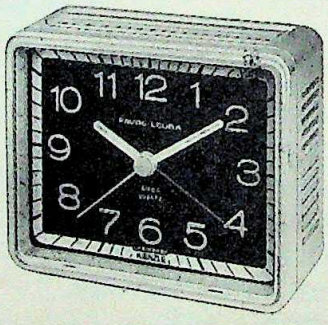

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ADVANCE WITH CAUTION

- India should understand that today China feels isolated and needs peace with her.
- LI Peng's visit should not be wasted in cliched platitudes.
- But the border question should be negotiated without conceding much.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Rao met Li Peng in Beijing with Rajiv in 1988, should maintain continuity

mindedness in the neighbourhood. Last month's SAARC summit fiasco is a case in point. Top-level sources admit it was a clear instance of vindictive diplomacy. "You have no idea how much hatred there is for President Premadasa within the MEA," says a former foreign secretary. The MEA succeeded in rebuffing him by scuttling the summit. But in return for savouring a point of pique, India caused itself long-term damage. First of all, this helped Pakistan and Sri Lanka to mount a propaganda war against the "bully" India. Second, it delivered a serious blow to the grouping which should ideally be India's platform for building a status of regional leadership. Finally, it gave a beleaguered Premadasa the opportunity to play the India bogey, putting dissidents on the defensive. It was a classic case of cutting your own nose to spite your neighbour.

Amidst such bunglings, if Indo-US relations have continued it is partly because of factors beyond the MEA's reach. Several negative reasons have brought the US closer to India: India is no longer seen as a Soviet ally, the end of the war in Afghanistan has robbed Pakistan of its coveted status as a frontline state and, more than India, the US is worried about Pakistan's nuclear ambitions. India has been able to take advantage of this change partly because of a rare meshing of thinking between the cabinet, the external affairs and the defence ministries. For example, when Army Chief S.F. Rodrigues visited the US in August, he carried a honed brief from the MEA and could thus consolidate the proposals for defence cooperation made earlier by the US Pacific Command Chief Lt-General Kickleighter. So positive was the result that it even prompted the prime minister to exhort army commanders, at a conference last month, to explore similar "professional-to-professional links with your Pakistani counterparts".

This was a clear example of a systematic approach showing results. The Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs (CCPA) took a decision to make an opening with the US, the MEA did the groundwork and even the army got involved in implementing the policy, a rarity in India's relatively conservative policy-making environment. Why should this not happen with greater frequency?

CHAOS, NOT COORDINATION

Lacking Vision, Functioning At Cross-Purposes

IT is one of the major structural faults of the foreign affairs establishment that just as various desks run policy in a cocooned manner in the MEA, the different wings of government also work in isolation. Senior western diplomats say India is one of the few countries not to have a foreign policy planning group. "It is an absolute must," says Gujral. At present there is no coordinated, long-term thinking, nor is there a crisis management committee which could have avoided gaffes of the kind India made on the Soviet coup. In reality, the coup caused utter confusion in the MEA with joint secretaries hunting for seniors to finalise India's response. As a result, the MEA spokesman had to face the press corps at his daily briefing with a "no comment". And when Rao made his remark on the reformers' zeal, he had obviously not been briefed. A policy planning group could also keep the MEA in touch with similar groups abroad. MEA sources recall India's embarrassment when Vladimir Lukin, chief of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's policy planning group, visited India in 1989 and asked to see his counterpart. He went back disappointed "after mucking around Delhi for a few

THE CRUCIAL WATERSHEDS

Analysts rank the current phase as one of India's four crucial foreign policy turning points.

1954-55: US military pacts with Pakistan had Nehru veering towards the Soviet Union.

1962: Chinese aggression and Soviet neutrality resulted in vital security links with the US.

1971: Tensions in East Pakistan and Nixon-Kissinger hostility led to the treaty with Moscow.

1991: End of Soviet communism and new economic groups have altered global equations.

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days". Now Lukin is Yeltsin's chief foreign policy advisor and knows little of India.

Besides, foreign policy is not merely a function of diplomats. It has to be a combination of internal and external security concerns and economic interests. This requires a strong inter-ministerial group to back the CCPA. What India has, on the contrary, is inter-service rows. The last few months have seen major battles for bureaucratic turf between outgoing foreign secretary Muchkund Dubey, the PMO and Cabinet Secretariat. The MEA complains that while it has been pushing economic diplomacy, no IFS officer is included on key bodies like the Foreign Investment Board and the Committee on Balance of Payments. Two months ago, Solanki wrote to Rao protesting this exclusion. But the IAS lobby prevented the letter from reaching him.

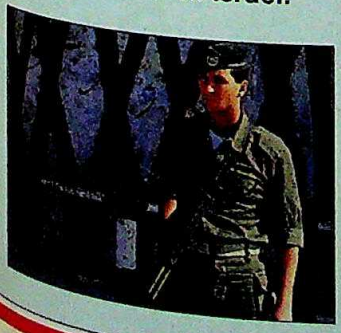
Surely, Rao realises that this has to change. The coming months will require major foreign policy decisions with a long-term bearing on domestic and economic affairs. It will be in India's interest to use Li Peng's visit, the first by a Chinese premier in 32 years, to take the relationship beyond pious platitudes and token gestures. The coming months will also require deft manoeuvring on old issues like relations with Israel, a role in the final settlement of the Afghan problem and trade with South Africa. Initiatives on Japan and in the ASEAN region will require a major push. Even if economic liberalisation is Rao's first priority, he will need to acknowledge that investment dollars will not come riding on the wings of a faltering foreign policy. ■

The Three Pariahs

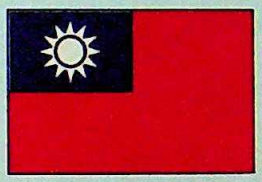
India looks towards the countries it has virtually boycotted so far

ISRAEL
Odd Couple

IF an arc is drawn from the Bay of Bengal to the Mediterranean, only India and Israel would be the only democracies with liberal constitutions. Both face the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and have no dispute between them. Yet, India shuns Tel Aviv; there is a small Israeli consulate in Bombay, though. Trade and security gains and diplomatic dividends in the West outweigh the past hypocrisy. Those who protest should be told of the changed Chinese and Soviet stand on Israel.



TAIWAN
Inspired Isle



INDIA does not recognise Taiwan but that shouldn't stop her from doing business with a small nation with $83 billion in dollar reserves? Excessive caution and even timidity on India's part have lost her an

opportunity. Only now have policy-makers woken up to the fact that more than 50 per cent of the investments in Indonesia are Taiwanese, not Japanese. And that by ignoring the island, India is indulging in self-denial it can ill-afford. If Beijing is annoyed, it only needs be reminded of the $5 billion trade it has with its estranged cousin.

SOUTH AFRICA
Opening Shot

WHETHER the MEA shrewdly handed the ball over to the Cricket Control Board or the cash-strapped board took the Government by total surprise with a googly is unclear. The upshot is that for once India has broken out of its old conservatism to launch cricket diplomacy with one of the world's richest and most promising economies. There is need now to build on this good start and the MEA, which even bars travel to South Africa for an Indian passport-holder, must not be allowed to lapse into inaction pleading that official steps will have to wait till Pretoria fulfills whatever yardsticks New Delhi lays down for good governance.

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NATIONAL FRONT

The Party's Over

The combine and its constituents gasp for survival

By JAVED M. ANSARI
with bureau reports

ITS office at Windsor Place in New Delhi says it all. Just two years ago it was the hub of the Indian political universe, as a supremely charged opposition bared its knuckles to kayo a Congress(I) dizzied by corruption charges. In those giddy days on the eve of the ninth Lok Sabha elections, it was here that V.P. Singh, N.T. Rama Rao, Devi Lal and others had held long conclaves to thrash out the strategy that would bring them to power. Today Windsor Place wears a deserted look. The staff has not been paid for months. Rent and phone bills are pending. The National Front headquarters is run by a solitary peon.

By all standards, the end of the road has come faster than anyone anticipated. In two years the five-party combine from being a viable centrist alternative to the Congress(I) has reduced itself to a shambles. The news of the National Front's decay comes from the horse's mouth. Rama Rao, an architect of the combine and its current chairman, now says he is ashamed and wants to quit. Other leaders refer to the front as more 'notional' than 'national'. Outside critics are no kinder. Says BJP President Murli Manohar Joshi: "Both the Janata Dal and the National Front are disintegrating, leaving space for our party to emerge as the only viable alternative to the Congress(I)." And one-time supporter, socialist Madhu Limaye, now believes "there is no chance for two centrist combinations to exist simultaneously in India as in Great Britain".

Of course, there are those who would feign optimism. V.P. Singh sees no problems that 'cannot be sorted out'. As K.P. Unnikrishnan, the front spokesman, says: "The new policies will boomerang in six months and the country will turn to us once again." Their allies concur. The CPI(M)'s Somnath Chatterjee says people will soon start looking beyond the BJP and the Congress(I). "The front," he declares, "will be upfront once again."

The confidence has the air of a mirage. For the tragedy is deep: not only is the front in its death throes, even its constituents are struggling for relevance. While the leaders of the Janata Dal are too busy fighting each other to have time to cross swords with the Congress(I) and the BJP, in the south the Telugu Desam and the DMK are reeling under the body blows dealt them by the electorate in successive elections. In the meanwhile, the AGP, afflicted by the virus that hit the Janata Dal, has split into two factions. The one unscathed constituent of the front is the Congress(S), for which a split is technically impossible since the party is only K.P. Unnikrishnan, the portly Lok Sabha member from Kerala.

The Janata Dal, from having a prime minister in office just last year, has now been reduced to a two-and-a-half state party. In its stronghold Uttar Pradesh it has yielded much ground to the BJP, while in Orissa, Chief Minister Biju Patnaik's heart seems to be with the Congress(I). Only in Bihar is the Janata Dal firmly entrenched, but that is owed less to the party's strengths than to Laloo Prasad Yadav's charisma. In Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the Janata Dal continues to languish in third place. Says K.R. Malkani, the BJP vice-president: "In these states, the Janata Dal must decide whether it wants to continue a distant third or come upfront by joining the Congress(I)."

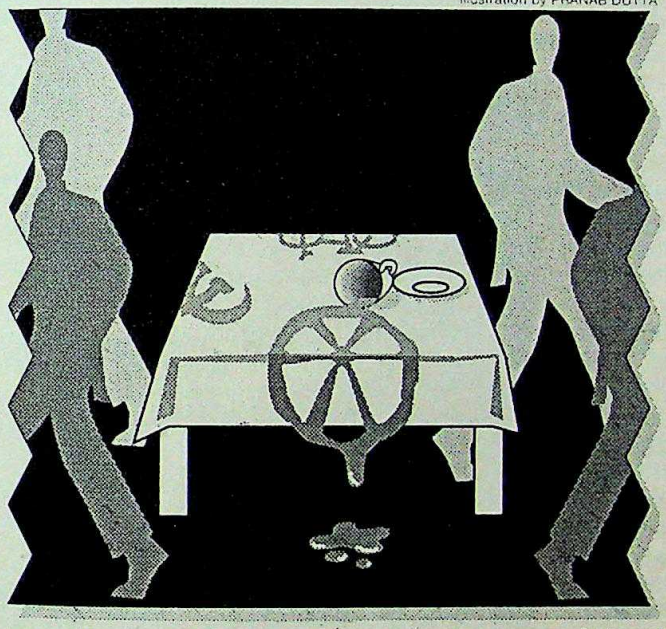
Rama Rao and the Telugu Desam are in no better shape. Rama Rao who blitzed the Congress(I) a few years ago on the slogan of Telugu pride has now been blanked out himself—what with a Telugu occupying top slot in Delhi. His magnanimous offer not to put up a candidate against P.V. Narasimha Rao, in retrospect, amounts to nothing since the other parliamentary and four assembly seats provided landslide wins for the Congress(I).

Worse still is the state of the DMK and M. Karunanidhi in Tamil Nadu. Having received the pasting of a lifetime from Jayalalitha, the DMK is now struggling to fend-off growing suspicions of its abetment of the LTTE in anti-national and criminal activities. Aware of the DMK's suspect credentials, front leaders are keeping it at an arm's length.

So, is it the end of the road for National Front or can it still pick up its pieces? Incorrigible optimists feel that as the BJP whips up the Ayodhya hysteria, many Congressmen frustrated at their party's inertia will consider switching to "secular-progressive forces". Says CPI central executive member Chaturanan Mishra: "There will always be possibilities for a genuine left-of-centre combination."

But right now this does not even seem a gleam in V.P. Singh's eye, for he has labelled even the Janata Dal a 'silly experiment'. The singular reason why the National Front will not revive like a phoenix is because its own leaders have not only repeatedly let it down but have also written it off. ■

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA



While the front is in its death throes, even its constituents are struggling for relevance.

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V.P. SINGH

That Sinking Feeling

Collapsing vote banks, feuding partymen, breakaway allies, and a humiliating setback in Amethi spell the end for the Raja.

By ZAFAR AGHA

EVERYTHING that worked for V.P. Singh during the past three years—caste combinations, minority vote machinations, populist pulpit-thumping, rabble-rousing rhetoric and pious posturing—seems to be falling apart as his craftily-structured castle comes crashing down.

Deserted by his flock, the former prime minister must be wondering what went wrong with the Jan Morcha, the Janata Dal and the National Front—those brave experiments with democracy. And whether those crowds were just a hallucinogenic dream.

The Amethi by-election was supposed to have been the overture of his come-back bid. But no one seems to be listening. The tragedy is that he had staked his stature on taking on Rajiv Gandhi's ghost in the family fiefdom. If the party candidate, Ram Singh, won or even came a close second, the Raja of Manda would win back his *praja*. The voter balance was just right: more than a lakh of Muslim voters, and a substantial segment of backward castes and Rajputs. Yet V.P. Singh's nominee wound up losing his deposit.

Amethi established that the one-time Teflon Thakur's grip on his vote bank has slipped. But he continues to whistle in the wind, claiming: "The Congress(I) continues to be the third force in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar." He is perhaps unable to count the multiplicity of forces within his own combine. The Janata Dal is ideologically divided between two camps. V.P. Singh, Laloo Prasad Yadav, Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan, along with a majority of the party MPs, still tom-tom the 'social justice' plank while Ajit Singh, Biju Patnaik and R.K. Hegde would like to sell it short. They also want some kind of rapprochement with the Congress(I). But Laloo Yadav and Sharad Yadav, like V.P. Singh, are still convinced of the Janata Dal's manifest destiny. As Singh declares: "The Janata Dal alone can fight the status quoist Congress(I) and a communal party like the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar." But others are as vehement in their disgust with the unending party feuds, persistent confusion, and differences of perception. Says George Fernandes: "My party is sick." Others feel the party's over, passed over by time and need. Says another lost leader, Hegde: "Our party is doomed unless it has a fresh orientation."

And as if keeping afloat the rag-tag-bobtail Janata Dal was not enough trouble, Telugu Desam supremo N.T. Rama Rao has served an ultimatum on parting company with the National Front. Even if Singh does bring Rama Rao to heel, the front no longer holds water as a viable and stable alternative to the Congress(I).

Clearly, V.P. Singh is off at the deep end and without a life-jacket. Sure, much of the rank and file is still with him. Avers Bihar MP, M.A. Fatmi: "Raja Saheb remains our leader and we will stand by him." But Amethi may well be the first stop on the long road back to small town obscurity for Singh. Even his magic with the minorities no longer works. The Janata Dal candidate in Bulandshahr—which has more than a lakh of Muslim voters—was humbled at the hustings. And his march to Ayodhya on October 29 failed to generate enthusiasm. As Babri Masjid Action Committee Co-chairman Zafaryab Jilani puts it: "Muslims have tremendous regard for V.P. Singh but they find that the Janata Dal is unable to defeat the BJP."

Worse, not even the vote bank for which he risked a government is as unitedly arrayed as it once was. In Uttar Pradesh, the Mandal messiah not only has to cope with Mulayam Singh Yadav, whose SJP won five assembly seats in the by-elections, but also Kanshi Ram, who won the Etawah Lok Sabha seat. And his party, the BSP, recorded a 2.1 per cent gain in votes. The quintessential Allahabadi knows that the challenge of Uttar Pradesh has to be tackled. His future strategy will involve using Mulayam Yadav and Kanshi Ram for the purpose—a combination built to

IDEOLOGICAL SCHISM

Janata Dal divided about future. Patnaik and Hegde want pact wi Congress(I) and dilution of Mand V.P. Singh, Laloo Yadav, Sharad Yadav endorse anti-Congress lin Yadavs also distancing themselves from Singh.

Biju Patnaik

Laloo Yadav

DRIFTING ALLIES

N.T. Rama Rao's public rejection of the National Front concept and announcement that he would like t float a new Bharat Desam party has caused Left leaders like Jyoti Basu to view V.P. Singh's leadership with grave suspicion.

N.T. Rama Rao

Jyoti Basu

SULKING COLLEAGUES

George Fernandes blames V.P. Singh's manipulations for party disintegration. And Ajit Singh has mounted a rebellion from within to capture party. He is trying to rally Muslim vote bank round his banner.

G. Fernandes

Ajit Singh

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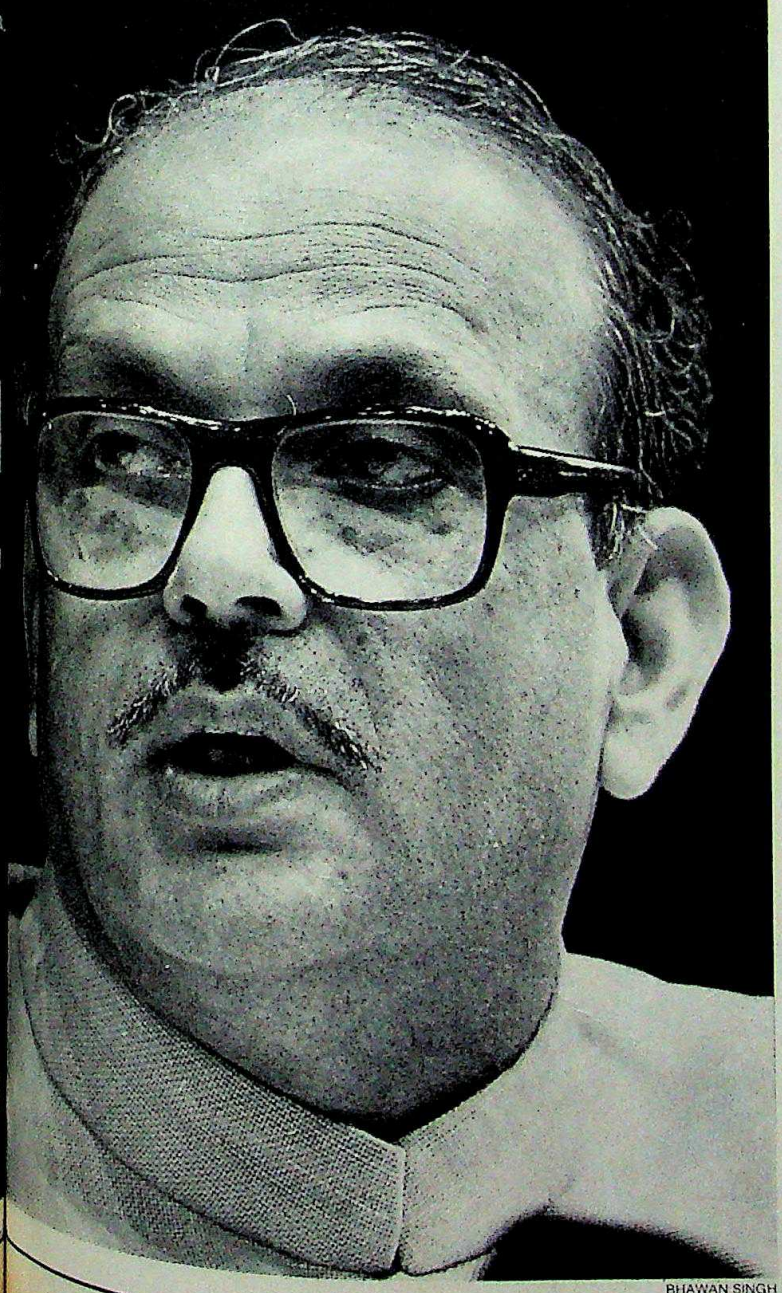
Imam Bukhari

Zafaryab Jilani

SLIPPING VOTE BANKS

Leaders like Zafaryab Jilani now doubt the JD's ability to fight the BJP. Muslims are increasingly turning to the Congress(I). Significantly Imam Bukhari issued no edict for Muslims to vote for JD in the byelections.



BHAWAN SINGH

destruct given the egos of both. As for Bihar, though the Janata Dal has done well, the Yadavs are not going to allow him an inch of their kingdom. The jeering that greeted him in Barh constituency, where he'd gone to campaign for party General Secretary Nitish Kumar, was in complete contrast to his earlier triumphs here. Laloo Yadav neither bothered to attend the meeting nor condemn the verbal attack.

MEANWHILE, Singh has realised the enormity of the gap between rhetoric and reality. The planks of social justice and value-based politics were easier to talk about than to translate into action. While Singh's personal integrity is still above suspicion, he remains an ineffective leader. His biggest failing is that nobody trusts him because he trusts nobody. While he has proudly boasted that his survival is based on his ability to manage contradictions, the plain truth is that he was simply playing the old divide and rule game. He has used Devi Lal against Chandra Shekhar; S.R. Bommai against S. Jaipal Reddy; Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammad Khan against Sharad Yadav and Paswan; Sharad Yadav against Ajit Singh; Paswan against Ram Dhan; and Srikant Jena against Biju Patnaik. Ultimately, when you play the game of my-enemy's-enemy-is-my-friend, you wind up losing friends as well as influence.

And the lasting impression of Singh even among those who admired him is not that of a national politician trying to soar to commanding heights but that of a petty moffusil *neta* who never outgrew the stifling parochialism of his *mohalla*. What gave Singh his special appeal—his political persona—was not so much leadership abilities as his being able to give utterance to and personify the anti-Rajiv Gandhi mood in the country. His colloquialism, his ability to scoff at the 21st century culture, his appeal to those born on the wrong side of the tracks, his inverted snobbery, his constant needling of English-speaking patricians was sheer music to those who saw themselves as the have-nots in juxtaposition to the Rajiv darbar.

In a sense, Singh's appeal was cultural. It fed on the existence of Rajiv Gandhi, drew political nourishment from it. But with Rajiv's death, the importance of being V.P. Singh has also diminished. As Orissa Chief Minister Biju Patnaik puts it: "The Janata Dal was a fluke against Rajiv Gandhi's style of functioning. The day Rajiv died, it perished. Now the party has to find a new operational base." ■

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N.T. RAMA RAO

Creator and Destroyer

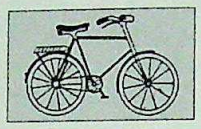
His honeymoon with the National Front over, party chairman Rama Rao embarks on new political antics, even planning an all-India party.

By SARITHA RAI in Hyderabad

LIKE Shiva, the creator and destroyer of the universe, N.T. Rama Rao, the demigod of Telugu and opposition politics, embodies twin avatars and alternates between them with ease. Tiring quickly of his role as creator, the chief architect of the National Front is now out to destroy his own brainchild. In a surprise move last fortnight, the front chairman announced his intention to launch a new national party, the Bharat Desam—a move that is directed at undercutting the National Front's image.

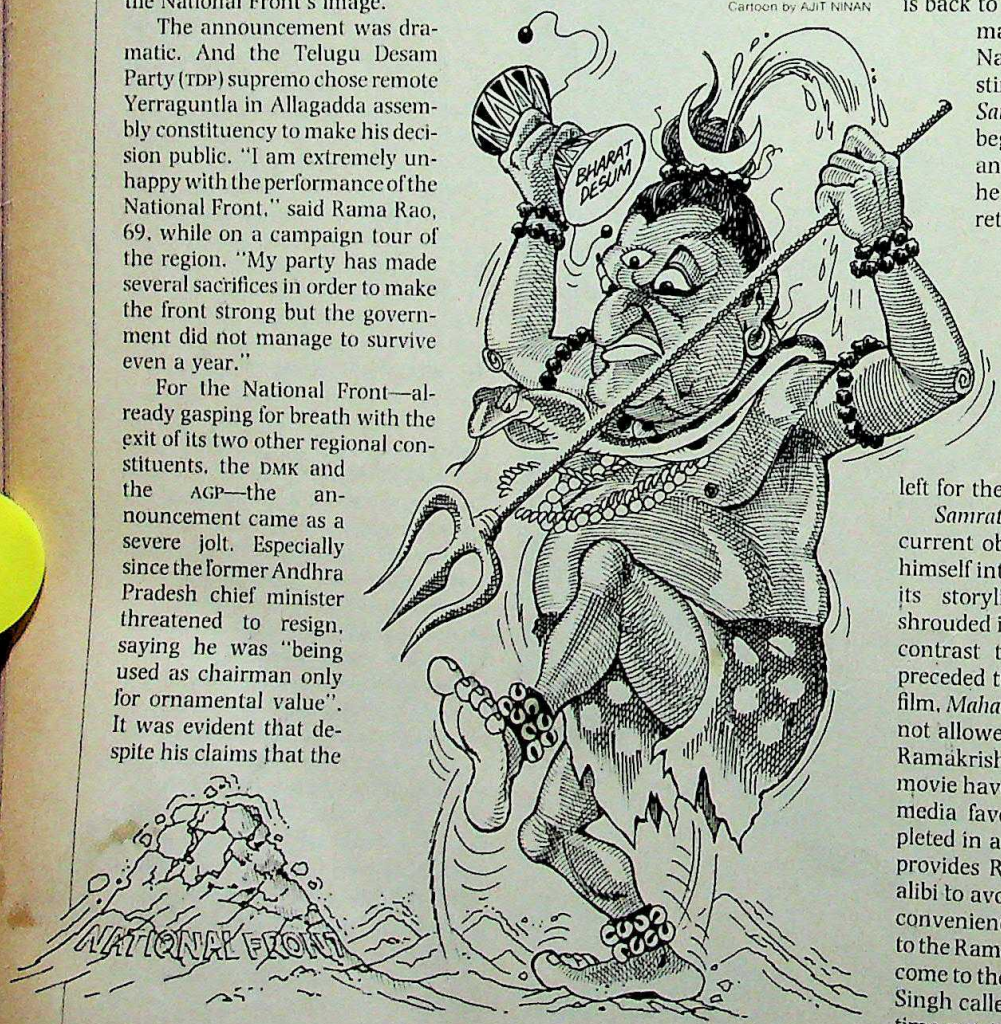
The announcement was dramatic. And the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) supremo chose remote Yerraguntla in Allagadda assembly constituency to make his decision public. "I am extremely unhappy with the performance of the National Front," said Rama Rao, 69, while on a campaign tour of the region. "My party has made several sacrifices in order to make the front strong but the government did not manage to survive even a year."

For the National Front—already gasping for breath with the exit of its two other regional constituents, the DMK and the AGP—the announcement came as a severe jolt. Especially since the former Andhra Pradesh chief minister threatened to resign, saying he was "being used as chairman only for ornamental value". It was evident that despite his claims that the creation of the Bharat Desam was intended as a viable alternative to the Congress(I), the arrow had in fact been directed at the National Front itself.



For the TDP chief this was a move come full circle. Rama Rao had nurtured a JP-like dream of bringing the Opposition under one umbrella since 1984 when his political fortunes had reached an all-time high. He had then worked his way through opposition conclaves, and almost singlehandedly forged opposition unity in August 1988 forming the National Front just in time for the 1989 Lok Sabha elections. But, characteristically, his disillusionment with the front has come just as quickly. Says TDP leader and Rama Rao loyalist, Raghuma Reddy: "Like in his movies, Rama Rao wants everything to happen in three hours."

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



The film world does indeed govern much of his life. Even now, while the Bharat Desam bombshell threatens to explode in the National Front's face, the grand showman of Telugu cinema is back to where he belongs—the Ramakrishna Studios situated at Nacharam. Shooting long stints for his latest megafilm, *Samrat Asoka*, Rama Rao's day begins at 3 a.m. with a pooja and yogasanas and by 5 a.m. he is already at the studio, returning only in the late evening to rest at his Abids bungalow. Complains his son-in-law and TDP General Secretary Chandrababu Naidu: "I wanted to discuss certain party matters with him. But when I telephoned at 5.30 in the morning, he had already left for the studio."

Samrat Asoka is indeed Rama Rao's current obsession and he is working himself into a frenzy over it. The film, its storyline and production are shrouded in a veil of secrecy, in sharp contrast to the publicity blitz that preceded the launch of his last megafilm, *Maharshi Viswamitra*. Visitors are not allowed into the heavily-guarded Ramakrishna Studios, no stills of the movie have been released, not even to media favourites. Slated to be completed in a couple of months, the film provides Rama Rao with the perfect alibi to avoid politics when it suits his convenience. Says a TDP worker close to the Rama Rao family: "He refused to come to the telephone when even V.P. Singh called." This, in contrast to the time not too long ago when he con-

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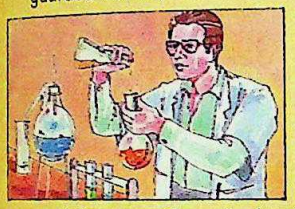

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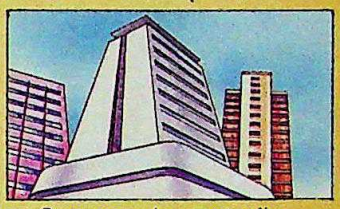

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ANDHRA PRADESH

BHIMAVARAM: P.P. Road, RATNAM ENTERPRISES • **GUNTUR: Brodipet,** RAJYALAKSHMI STEEL HOUSE, 4-1 Lane • **Main Road,** MATTUPALLY SAMBAMOORTHY, Arundalpet • **HANUMAKONDA: Main Road,** RAMESH STEEL PALACE, Near Police Station • **HYDERABAD: Ameerpet,** MAHAVEER STEEL PALACE, Satyam Theatre Road • **Metro Estate,** VISHAL HOME APPLIANCES, Abid Road • **Nampally Station Road,** ANJALI ELECTRONICS, Near Hotel Apsara • STEEL PALACE, Near Hotel Kakatya • **Narayanguda,** CITY EMPORIUM, Near Police Quarters • **Sultan Bazar,** BALIRAM KHIYARAM, Near Veg Market • **KAKINADA: Main Road,** GUPTA EMPORIUM, Surya Raopet • **KURNOOL: Park Road,** ANDHRA KITCHEN WARES • **MAHABOOB NAGAR: Raichur Road,** NEW GUPTA TRADERS • **RAJAMUNDRY: Near Fort Gate,** ANDHRA MACHINE AGENCIES • **SECUNDERABAD: Rashtrapathy Road:** SAKERMALA STEEL PALACE, Opp. Bata • DECCAN IRON WORKS, Opp. Bata • **VIJAYAWADA: Kaleswara Rao Street,** SRI SATYANARAYANA METALS, Governorpet • **Kothagullu,** SRI VENKATESWARA METAL HOUSE, Seshaiah Street • **Prakasham Road,** JYOTI METALS, Governorpet • **VISAKAPATNAM, Main Road,** BOMBAY GAS LIGHT STORES, Near Krishi Road

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

PASIGHAT: Gandhi Market, ARUNACHAL ELECTRICALS

ASSAM

DIBRUGARH: H.S. Road, VERMA CROCKERY STORES • **New Market,** S. DUTTA & CO. • **GUWAHATI: S.R.C.B. Road,** R. CHAMPAKLAL (ASSAM) & CO. • SHYAM METAL STORES • **NALBARI: N.T. Road,** MARUTI ELECTRONICS • **SIBSAGAR: Hospital Road,** ANAMIKA STORES • J.P. Agarwalla Path, HANUMAN BUX PRADIP KUMAR • **Temple Road,** CHIMANLAL AGARWALLA • **SILCHAR: N.S. Avenue,** RAVI PRAKASH ANAND & CO. • **TINSUKIA: Daily Bazar,** NAZIR AHMED & SONS • **G.N.B. Road,** RAVI PRAKASH ANAND & CO.

BIHAR

BEGUSARAI: I.K.N. Market, BIHAR COMMERCIAL AGENCY, Shop No. 1 • **Main Road,** DEO BROTHERS • **BHAGALPUR: D.N. Singh Road,** DOKANIA & SONS • LIGHT CENTRE • MEHA STORES • **BOKARO STEEL CITY: Sector 4,** AMRAPALI, E-4, City Centre • BOMBAY VARIETY STORES, E-15, City Centre • **CHAIBASA: Sadar Bazar,** K.C. PAUL & BROS. • **DARBHANGA: Subhash Chowk,** BABA STEEL HOUSE • **DEHRI ON SONE: Cinema Road,** GLASSINA • SAHELI • **DEOGARH: Shyamganj Road,** BAIDYANATH ELECTRIC STORES • **GAYA: G.B. Road,** PAPPU TRADING CO., Gaal Patthar • **JAMSHEDPUR: Sakchi Bazar,** BINDESHARI PRASAD ANANT PRASAD, Dalda Line • COOKER HOUSE, 25, Old Alu Line, Pan Market • NEEL KAMAL STEEL CENTRE, 24, Old Alu Line, Pan Market • **KATIHAR: Mangal Bazar,** BHOWMICK BROTHERS • **Shah Katra,** ROOP RANG, New Market Road • **KHAGARIA: Mill Road,** SHYAM ELECTRICALS • **MOTIHARI: Main Road,** DULHAN JEWELLERY & STEEL HOUSE • STEEL CORNER • **MUNGER: Chowk,** MAHENDRA ELECTRIC STORES • **Town Hall Road,** JAIAN TRADERS • **MUZAFFARPUR: Saraiya Ganj,** BINJRAJKA STEEL HOUSE • **PATNA: Boring Road,** H.C. ENTERPRISES, Nepali Kothi • **Muradpur,** STEEL CORNER, Opposite Rajkipur Post Office • **New Market,** SAWHNEY & ELECTRICALS • **PURNEA: Bhatta Bazar,** LAKHAN LAL & CO. • **RANCHI: Main Road,** KAILASH CROCKERY HOUSE • THE RANCHI MOTOR & CYCLE STORES, Near Bata Shop • UDAYAN • UJALA • UDAY AGENCIES, Khaganchi Market • **RAXAUL: Bank Road,** PAWAN GENERAL STORES • **SITAMARHI: Main Road,** SREE CHANDRIKA STORES • **SIWAN: Naya Bazar,** NEW ASHA STORES, Darbar Market

CHANDIGARH

CHANDIGARH: Sector 15D, INDIAN CROCKERY HOUSE, Shop No. 45 • **Sector 17E,** JAGAT SINGH AND SONS, SGF 32.

GOA

MAPUSA: Opp. Municipality Market, MAYUR AGENCIES, 17 Ramchandra Bldg. • **MARGAO: New Market,** D.D. SADEKAR & SONS, Shop No. 10 • **Opp. Municipality,** T.D. PARODKAR • **Station Road,** T.A. HAYARE & SONS • **PANJIM: Opp. Azad Maidan,** S.T. POKLE & SONS • **PONDA: Ponda,** SHANTA ELECTRIC STORES • **VASCO: Dorado Building,** BARKAT ALI TRADERS.

GUJARAT

BAWDA: M.G. Road, M/S KANSARA BAPULAL RANCHODJI

HARYANA

HISSAR: Moti Bazar, KEWAL KRISHAN INDER SAIN. • **JAGADHRI, Manohar Nagar,** O.P. METAL INDUSTRIES • **ROHTAK: Railway Road,** PARKASH CROCKERY HOUSE • **SIRSA: Rori Bazar,** AGGARWAL BARTAN BHANDAR.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

KULLU: Akhara Bazar, VIGSON GENERAL STORE.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

JAMMU: New Market, LADHUMALDESRAJ JAIN, Raghunath Bazar.

KARNATAKA

BANGALORE: Avenue Road, B.M. AGENCIES, 301 • **Brigade Road,** POTS & PANS, 11, Curzon Complex • **B.V.K. Iyengar Road,** MAHESH ELECTRICALS, 14/5 • **Chickpet,** RAJA TRADING CO., 802, Near Balepet Square • RASHMI STEELS, 340 • **Jayanagar,** SARATHY, 16, 9th Main, 3rd Block • **Shivaji Nagar,** ADAMS & COMPANY, 19, Richards Square • **BELGAUM: Maruthi Galli,** REVANKAR ELECTRICALS, Ramprasad Buildings • **CHICKAMAGALUR: Ratnagiri Road,** MULTI ENTERPRISES, P.B. No. 8 • **HASSAN: Subhash Square,** NOVELTY HOUSE • **MYSORE: Ashoka Road,** ARUNODAY, 15/1 • **SHIMOGA, Nehru Road,** SADHANA TRADING CO. • **UDUPI: K.M. Marg,** HARSHA

KERALA

ALLEPPEY: C.C.N.B. Road, GOOD MORNING AGENCIES • **Mullackal,** BHIMA STAINLESS STEEL & STEEL INDUSTRIES • **ALWAYE: Catholic Centre,** WIRELESS METRO • **CALICUT:** BRIGHT METALS, Muthalakulam • PANKAJ DISTRIBUTORS, S.M. Street • **CANNANORE:** STAINLESS STEEL CENTRE, Camp Bazar • GRIHALAKSHMI, S.N. Park Road • **ERNAKULAM: Broadway,** ANTHONY FRANCIS & SON • MAHMOOD CROCKERIES, Kerala Wakf Board Building • **Palarivattom Junction,** SANTHI VESSELS • **T.D. Road (North),** PRODUCTS & SERVICES • **IRINJALAKUDA: Big Bazar,** VELIANIKARAM AGENCIES, Vellanikaram Bldg. • **KODUGALLORE: Main Road,** KARUN STORES, South Nada • **KOTTARAKKARA, Main Road,** IDEAL AGENCIES, Ideal House • **KOTTAYAM: K.K. Road,** KEMS AGENCIES, M.D. Commerce Centre • **Pulimood Junction,** BHUVANA METAL MART • ST. ANTHONY'S • **MAHE:** KARMA ENTERPRISES, Main Road • **Opp. Church,** SREELEKH AGENCIES, Main Road • **MUVATTUPUZHA: New Bazaar,** MINI STORES • **PALGHAT:** STEEL PALACE, G.B. Road • **PATHANAMTHITTA: Private Bus Stand,** LEKHA TRADERS • **PERUMBAVOOR: A.M. Road,** PITTAPPILIL AGENCIES, Near Vegetable Market • **QUILON: Main Road,** BROTHERS STEEL HOUSE, Sultania Building • **TELLICHERY: Narangapuram,** KRISHNA ELECTRONICS, A.V.K. Nair Road • **THODUPUZHA: Main Road,** MANNOOR BROTHERS • **Matha Shopping Complex,** ST. PETER'S AGENCIES, C/o Alappat Agencies • **TRICHUR: Post Office Road,** HANEEF TRADERS, Geo Building • STEELALAYAM, Opp. Head Post Office • **Round South,** KERALA LEATHER CO., Near Govt. Hospital • **TRIVANDRUM: Chalai Bazaar,** S. IBRAHIM & CO., Ibrahim Buildings

MADHYA PRADESH

AMBIKAPUR: Sadar Bazar, SONA ROOPA • **BETUL: Ganj,** BAL MUKUND GUPTA • **BHILAI: Camp No. 2,** GARGI GENERAL STORES, B-14, Circular Market • **CHHATARPUR: Mahal Road,** AGARSEN EMPORIUM • **DABRA: Kamala Market,** ADHUNIK KITCHENWARE • **DAMOH: Cinema Road,** AJANTA TRADERS • **GADARWARA: Jawahar Ganj,** MANGAL KALASH, Jhanda Chowk • **GWALIOR: Topi Bazar,** PAHOORAM PESURAM LOKWANI • **INDORE: Jawahar Marg,** COOKER HOUSE, Shop No. 370 • **Ram Laxman Bazar:** N.R. ELECTRONICS, Shop No. 23 • **KHANDWA: M.G. Road,** KHANDWA PLASTIC CENTRE, 462, Bombay Bazar • **MANENDRAGARH: Main Road,** SUPREME ELECTRICALS, Nagar Palika Bhawan • **RAIPUR: Malviya Road,** SURANA SALES • SURESH BROTHERS • **Sadar Bazar,** M.S. TRADERS • SHRI PATRA BHANDAR • **RAJNANDGAON: Juni Hatri,** CHHOTE SOUND SYSTEM • **RATLAM: Do Batti,** ROOPYAN STORES • **SEONI: Barapatthar,** VISHAL STEEL CENTRE.

MANIPUR

IMPHAL: Paona Bazar, PASA ENTERPRISES • **Thangal Bazar,** ROOPAK AGENCY • SUDARSHAN'S • **SINGJAMEI: Main Road,** NEW VARIETY.

MAHARASHTRA

AHMEDNAGAR: New Cloth Market, KASHINATH TRIMBAK RASANE, M.G. Road, Shop No. 2554 • **BOMBAY SOUTH: Dadar,** DHIRAJ SALES CORPORATION, 33, Pandaye Wadi, Bhavani Shankar Road • P.B. POONAMIYA & CO., M.C. Javale Marg • **Grant Road,** VARIETY GEN. STORES, 297,

Continued on next page

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HAWKINS

Lamington Road • **CENTRAL SUBURBS:** **Chembur,** NATRAJ EMPORIUM, 4, Station Road • SILVER CENTRE, 3, Laxmi Market • **Dombivli,** MUKESH STEEL & NOVELTIES, Phadke Road, Damle Buildings • **Kalyan,** PRABHAT APPLIANCES, Bazar Peth, Opp. Vishnu Mandir • **Sion,** SRI MURUGAN STEEL HOUSE, 11/39, Maryland Corner • **Thane:** Naupada, MAHAVIR, Hem Shopping Centre, Gokhale Road • **Vashi: Sector 17,** MURUGAN ENTERPRISES, Shop No. 55, Near Big Splash • **WESTERN SUBURBS: Borivli,** OSWAL STEEL CENTRE, 18, Goyal Shopping Centre • PRAMANIK DISTRIBUTORS, Vile Parle, MANSUKH DISTRIBUTORS, 19(B) Agarwal Market • **KOLHAPUR:** Gijare, B.T. VANKUDRE • **NAGPUR:** Bwari, BANDELI MOHOMADALI, Bhandara Road • **Sitabuldi,** MEGHNA METALS, Super Market • **NASIK: 848, Bhandi Bazar,** PRAKASH RAMDAS KALE • **Shivaji Road,** VIJAY TRADING CO., Shalimar Building • **Veer Savarkar Peth,** MANSUKHLAL NARANDAS • **PIMPRI: Near Arya Samaj,** RAJ KUMAR ENTERPRISE • **POONA: 39/248 Karve Road,** JAIN METALS, Opp. Bank of Maharashtra • **Raviwar Peth,** MEHTA BROTHERS, 206 Phoolwala Chowk • RAVENDRA & CO., 894 Daroowala Bridge • **SANGLI: Harbhat Road,** BHAGATI STEEL CENTRE, Near Alwadi High School • **Main Road,** SHREE AMEYA STEEL CENTRE, Karmarkar Building • **SATARA: Manish Market,** THOMBARE NOVELTIES • **SHOLAPUR: Navipeth,** STEEL CENTRE, 4A LB Shastri Shopping Centre • SHOLAPUR STAINLESS STEEL HOUSE, 4 Paras Estate • **UMRAJ: Main Road,** S.M. MOHIRE

MEGHALAYA

SHILLONG: Bawri Mansion, V.K. GHAI & CO. Dhankheti.

NEPAL

KATHMANDU: Thamel, MALU TRADING, 16/78

ORISSA

BARAGARH: Main Road, ASHOK ELECTRICALS • **BARBIL: Main Road,** BHAWANI VARIETIES • **BERHAMPUR: Bhapur Bazar,** SILLA GOPALAM & SONS • **Girl Market,** ALLIED STORES • **One-way Traffic Road,** J. K. ENTERPRISES • **Sana Bazar,** RAGHABENDRA & CO. • **BRAJRAJ NAGAR: Main Road,** MAHENDRA • **CUTTACK: Mahatab Road,** INDIAN INDUSTRIES • **Tinkonia Baghicha,** SUNITA • **JASHIPUR: Main Road,** JANATA AGENCIES • **JHARSUGUDA: Main Road,** JHARSUGUDA METAL STORE • **KEONJHAR: New Market,** PRIYA STORE • SRI DURGA AGENCIES • **MUNIGUDA: Main Road,** RAJESH BOOK STORE • **PHULBANI: Main Road,** ARJUN SENAPATI & SONS • **RAJGANGPUR: Main Road,** PRADEEP STORES • **ROURKELA-7: Fertiliser Township,** SRI BALDEVJI ENTERPRISES • **ROURKELA: Sec-5 Market,** PRESTIGE, Shop No. 1 • SELECTION CENTRE, Shop No. 16.

PUNJAB

AMRITSAR: Hall Bazar, RAGHBIR SINGH KATARIA & SONS • **Pratap Bazar,** PURI BATTERY STORE • **BHATINDA: Dhobi Bazar,** GOYAL BARTAN STORE • **Gandhi Market,** KANCHAN CROCKERY HOUSE • SUBHASH & CO. • **JALANDHAR: Bazar Sheikhan,** KHABANDA SHOPPING CENTRE • **G.T. Road,** J. OM PRAKASH & SONS, Opp. Civil Hospital • **Naya Bazar,** BOMBAY STAINLESS STEEL (Regd.), Near Milap Chowk • **KOTKAPURA: Railway Road,** AHUJA GIFT HOUSE • **MOGA: Bagh Gali,** CROCKERY PALACE • **Main Bazar,** NANDKISHORE AGGARWAL & SONS • **PATHANKOT: Main Bazar,** SINGLA GIFT HOUSE • **PHAGWARA, Loha Mandi Road,** A.K. TRADERS, C/o Tilak Raj Darshan Kumar Mata.

MINIATURE COOKER DEALERS

RAJASTHAN

ALWAR: Hope Circus, JANTA BARTAN BHANDAR, Shop No. 39 • **BHARATPUR: Neem Da Gate,** KISHORI SHYAM BRIJESH KUMAR • **JAIPUR: Nehru Bazar,** ASHOKA DEPARTMENTAL STORE, Near Mayur Cinema • **Raja Park,** LONGLIFE DEPARTMENTAL STORE, 372, Gali No. 1 • **KHETRI NAGAR: Subhash Market,** AMAR JYOTI FANCY STORE, Shop No. 38 • **SIKAR: Nehru Marg,** SIKAR BARTAN BHANDAR

TAMIL NADU

CHIDAMBARAM: SRI VINAYAGA PATHIRAKADAI, 25, South Car Street • **COIMBATORE: Lakshmi Complex,** COVAI STEELS, 48, Lakshmi Complex, Gandhipuram • **R.S. Puram,** IDEAL GIFT HOUSE, No. 8, East Rishyagaralu Road • **DINDIGUL: Big Bazar,** S.M.B. MANICKAM NADAR (FIRM), 163, 164 • **St. Mary's Shopping Complex,** S.M.B.M. TRADERS, 41, Matha Building, Main Road • **ERODE: Madhava Krishna Street,** UNIVERSAL TRADERS, 22 • **MADRAS: Adayar,** SELVA VINAYAGAR STORES, 73/1, L.B. Road • **Alwarpet,** SANTHOSA NADAR AGENCY, 17, Beemana Mudali Street • **Evening Bazar,** M.A. ETHIRAJULU NAIDU, 18 • P.L.D. RAJENDRAN BROS, 15-C • S. SANTHOSA NADAR SON (FIRM), 88, Nattappa Naicker Street • **Purasawakkam,** RAJA METAL STORE, 264 Purasawakkam High Road • **T. Nagar,** RATHNA METALS, 55, Ranganathan Street • RATHNA STORES (FIRM), 47-A, Pondy Bazar • SABHARI DISTRIBUTORS, No. 64, Rathna Complex, Ranganathan Street • SARAVANA STORES, 13, Ranganathan Street • SUNDAR STORES, 68, Usman Road • **MADURAI: Amman Sannathi,** S. SANTHOSA NADAR CORPN., No. 3 • **East Avani Moola St.,** IBRAHIM & CO., 90/92 • **East Veli Street,** ALLWINRAJ METAL CENTRE, 180/181 • **Kamarajar Salai,** S. CHELLIAH NADAR & SONS, 267 • **Netaji Road,** NEW MUTHUSELVI CORPN., 109 • **South Avani Moola St.,** ANANTHA STORES, 42 • **MARTHANDAM, North St.,** THAI SUBBIAN METALS, 32/98 • **NAGERCOIL: Court Road,** PONNIAH ENTERPRISES, 117 • **PATTUKOTTAI:** SRI RAAMU FURNITURE, 19, Thalaiyari Street • **SALEM: Bazaar Street,** NATIONAL AGENCIES, 348 • V. CHANDRASEKARAM & CO., 361 • V. CHANDRASEKARAM & SONS, 357 • **Big Bazar Street,** V.C.R. METAL COMPANY, 87 • **SIVAKASI: South Car St.,** M.V.K.D. THANGAVELU NADAR, 8 • **THENI: Subban Chetty Street,** GIRI TRADERS, 299 • **TIRUNELVELI:** S. SANTHOSA NADAR & SONS, 37, High Road • **TIRUPUR: Easwaran Koil Street,** KAVITHA AGENCY, 45 • **TRICHY: Doublemal Street,** SRI MANGAL ENTERPRISES, 19 • PREMAH EVERSILVER PALACE, 411, N.S.B. Road • **VELLORE: Arcot Road,** SEENU AGENCIES, No. 80 • **Main Market,** BRIGHT STEEL HOUSE, G-31 • **VIRUDHUNAGAR, Katchery Road,** GEMINI AGENCIES, 203.

UTTAR PRADESH

AGRA: Johari Bazar, DADA GLASS AND CROCKERIES • **ALIGARH: Railway Road,** GUJATI STORES, New Market • JAI BHARAT CROCKERY HOUSE • **ALLAHABAD: Chowk,** GUR PRASAD HIRA LAL • **Katra,** JAIN TRADING CO., 1143, Katra Crossing • **Near Power House,** NOVELTY HOUSE, 6C, Kamla Nehru Marg • THE SAIR COMPANY • **Vivekananda Marg,** DIAMOND TEA SALES, Opposite Chameli Dharamshala • **BALLIA: Station Malgodown Road,** VIJAY GUN HOUSE • **BAHRAICH: Chowk Bazar,** SHYAM LAL AND SONS • **BAREILLY: Najnital Road,** DUA BROTHERS • **BULANDSHAHR: Ansari Road,** KANSAL CROCKERY STORE • **DEORIA: Moti Lal Road,** OM STORES • **DEHRADUN: Paltan Bazar,** SUSHIL & COMPANY, Shop No. 95 • VED PRAKASH GOEL, Shop No. 120 • **FAIZABAD: Chowk,** KARIM KHAN • **GONDA: Utraula Road,** PARAS STEEL EMPORIUM, Raja Raghuran Market • **GORAKHPUR: Cinema Road,** GANESHI LAL & SONS • **Golghar,** FINE CROCKERY HOUSE, 16, Water Works Building • GANESHI LAL RAM NIWAS AGENCIES, Station Road • MODERN CROCKERY MUSEUM, 18, Water Works Building • **Town Hall,** VIJAY AGENCIES, Shop No. 16-17 • **HALDWANI: Bareilly Road,** SARDAR CROCKERY HOUSE, Near Sindhi Sweets • **Karkhana Bazar,** BOMBAY CROCKERY HOUSE • **HAPUR: Railway Road,** CROCKERY CENTRE, Gandhi Bhawan • **HARDWAR: Moti Bazar,** OM PRAKASH CHELA RAM • **JAUNPUR: Harlalka Road,** GLASS STORE • **JWALAPUR: Main Bazar,** NEW VIMAL METALS • **KANPUR: Birhana Road,** M.K. TRADERS (Bartan Wale), 58/45 • **Gumti No. 5,** ISH ELECTRICALS, 118/2, Kaushal Puri, Opp. Jaihind Cinema • LAXMI STEEL HOUSE, 118/164, Kaushal Puri • **Harsh Nagar,** M.K. AGENCIES, Shop No. 111/2, 1st Floor, Opp. Bank of India • **Navin Market,** KUMAR FANCY STORES, Shop No. 114 • **LUCKNOW: Aminabad,** RAM SARAN & COMPANY • **Nazirabad,** CHAMAN LAL AGGARWAL AND SONS, C/o Kanhaiya Lal Parag Das • **Yahiyaganj,** KANHAIYA LAL PRAG DAS, Pili Kothi • **MEERUT: Pan Dariba,** MODERN LIGHT HOUSE, 222, Khair Nagar Bazar • **MIRZAPUR: Waseliey Ganj,** KRISHNA ELECTRICAL AGENCY, Sardar Bhagat Singh Marg • **MORADABAD: Bazarganj,** CROCKERY EMPORIUM, Opposite Kotwali • **Chowmukhapul,** PREM CROCKERIES, Amroha Gate • **MUZAFFARNAGAR: Court Road,** GOEL AGENCIES • **NAJIBABAD: Bazar Chowk,** KWALITY EMPORIUM • **RENUKOOT:** SUPER BAZAR HINDALCO • **RISHI KESH: Chettar Road,** MOTI RAM RAMAKANT • **ROORKEE, Civil Lines,** MORADABAD HOUSE • **RUPAIDIHA:** RAMDOOT STORES • **SAHARANPUR: Nehru Market,** NIHAL CHAND HARBANSLAL, Shop No. 14 • **SAKTINAGAR: Vidyut Vihar,** JYOTI STORES, Shop No. 6, Shopping Centre • **SULTANPUR: Shah Ganj Chowk,** S.R. STEEL EMPORIUM, Lala Suraj Lal Market • **VARANASI: Bans Phatak,** GIRDHAR DAS AND SONS • **Lahurabir,** U.P. GLASS STORES, Shop No. C26/108, Opp. SBI • **Nichi Bagh,** RASOI GHAR, Near Bata Shoe Co.

WEST BENGAL

ALIPURDUAR: New Town, BASANTI ELECTRIC STORES • **AMTOLA: Kannya Nagar,** PROVASH CH. SAHA • **ARAMBAG: Near Girls School,** NEW RAMKRISHNA BASANALAYA • **ASANSOL: Near Old Bus Stand,** EAGLE GLASS HOUSE, G.T. Road • **BAKURA: Nutan Ganj,** POPULAR FURNITURE SYNDICATE, Dr. S.P. Mukherjee Road • **BALLY: Bally Bazar,** ANNAPURNA STORES, 4/1 Iswar Dey Lane • **BALURGHAT: Lenin Sarani,** SRI KRISHANA STORES • **BARASAT: Capital Market,** NEW SANSAR • **BERHAMPUR:** AAJKAL, 53 Bon Behari Sen Road • **BHADRAKALI:** QUALITY STORES, 69, B.F.B. Sarani • **BHADRESWAR: Bhadreswar Bazar,** SONALI, 65, G.T. Road • **BOINCHI: Boinchi Rail Gate,** SONARTARI • **BURDWAN: Near Thana,** PRAYOJANI, 497, B.C. Road • SILPA SADAN, 25, B.C. Road • **Tetul Tala,** WEST BENGAL STORES, B.B. Ghosh Road • **CALCUTTA: Alam Bazar,** VENU'S, 2, Kalikrishna Tagore Road • **Bagree Market,** UNITED STATIONERS, C-21 • VINOD & CO., D-5 Bagree Market • **Baguiati Durga Bari,** MANIMALA, AA/12 Baguiati Road • M.G ELECTRONICS, Baguiati Bazar • **Bara Bazar,** MOHANLAL MADHAWJEE, 59, Cotton Street • **Behala,** NEW BEHALA STEEL HOUSE, 400/1, D.H. Road • **Beliaghata,** SANSAR, 123 Hemchandra Naskar Road • **Bhowanipore,** AMITA STORES, 144A, A. Mukherjee Road • PORCELAIN STORES, 2B, S.P. Mukherjee Road • **Birati,** PRIYABRATA AGENCY, Backside of Rly. Quarters • **Chandni Chowk,** CROCKERY CENTRE, 41B • NAG & SON, 6 Chandni Chowk St. • **College Street Market,** DUTTA BROTHERS, 41/42, College Street • **Deshapriya Park,** NEPAL SHANKAR & CO., 85, Rash Behari Avenue • **Garia,** UNITED SALES EMPORIUM, P45 Raja, S.C. Mullick Road • **Golpark,** T.R. ELECTRIC CO., 23/37, Gariahat Road • **Hatibagan,** ASHOK TRADING CORPN., 83/2E Bidhan Sarani • MODERN MUSEUM, 137, Bidhan Sarani • **Hazra Road,** SHYAM TRADERS, 62/1A • **Hedua,** AVANTIKA ELECTRONIC, 173/3 Bidhan Sarani • **Italgacha,** ANANDA TRADERS, (Inside Airport Gate), 22 Tarunsen Gupta Sarani • **Lake Market,** LAKE BASAN STORES, 104, Rash Behari Avenue • SREE DURGA STORES, D-5, 104 R.B. Avenue • **Nager Bazar,** SUJATA ENTERPRISES, 6, A.M. Bose Road (Near Satgachi More) • **Old China Bazar,** AMARNATH KUNDU BROS., 14/3 • LAMP HOUSE PVT. LTD., 23, Canning Street • PARAGON TRADE CENTRE, 17 • S.L. CONDOO & CO., Shop No. 206 • SATCOWRIE DASS & CO., 196 • **Posta,** NANDY STORES, 50 Kalikrishna Tagore Street • NIRMAL CHANDRA NANDY, 50 Kalikrishna Tagore Street • **Sealdah,** LAXMINARAYAN BASANALAYA, 133-H, A.J.C. Bose Road, (Ground-Floor of Ashoka Hotel) • RUBY CYCLE STORES, 11 M.G Road, (Opp. Chabi Ghar Cinema) • SITALA AGENCY, 9A, M.G. Road (Opp. Chabi Ghar Cinema) • TARAKNATH STORES, 151A, B.B Ganguly Street (Near Kolay Market) • **Sham Bazar,** SANGEETA ENTERPRISES, 123, Bidhan Sarani • **Tobin Road,** MULLIKA ELECTRONICS, 83/2, B.T. Road • **CHAKDAH: Bus Stand,** BASAN BIPANI, Bonogram Road • **Opp. Post Office,** STEEL VARIETY, N.S. Road • **CHANDANNAGAR: Laxmiganj Bazar,** WESTERN TRADING CO. • **CHINSURA: Kharua Bazar,** MAHADEB KUNDU & CO., N.S. Road • **CHITTARANJA: Amladahi Market,** MODERN STEEL FURNITURE (UNIVERSAL), Shop No. A 1/R 3 • **CONTAI: Main Road,** SABITRI BHANDAR • **DHANIAKHALI: Dhaniakhali Bazar,** KOHINOOR STEEL FURNITURE • **DIAMOND HARBOUR: Near Uco Bank,** BATOKRISHNA PAUL & BROS. • **DINHATA: Chowrahat,** BADDYANATH SAHA & BROS. • **DURGACHAWK: Colony Market,** PRATIK • **DURGAPUR: Benachitty,** DIPTY • **Chandidas Market,** PRINCE • **Station Bazar,** RAKAMARI, Station Road • RUJ BROTHERS, C/O ASIT KUMAR RUJ, Hat Tala Road • **FARAKKA: Shop No.6-19,** MODERN TRADING AGENCY, Chittaranjan Market • **GHATAL: Kuthi Bazar,** TAIJASPATRA • **HABRA: Jessore Road,** MAKALI BHANDAR • **HOWRAH: Opposite Bangabasi Cinema,** HOWRAH ELECTRONICS, 4, Chintamoni Dey Road • **Kalibabur Bazar,** ELECTROSOUND, 324, N.S. Road • **Shibpur Bazar,** SREE GURU BASANALAYA, 34/2, Shibpur Road • **JIAGANJ: Churipatty,** JOGAMAYA STORES, (Opp. Laxmi Cinema) • **KANCHRAPARA: Workshop Road,** BANGALAXMI BASANALAYA • **KHARAGPUR: D.V.C. Market,** KUSUM STEEL EMPORIUM, Talbagicha • **Gole Bazar,** ARVIND STORES, 87, Railway Market • **KIRNAHAR: Kirnahar Bazar,** BICHITRA STORES • **MALDA: D.C.R. Market,** SREE BISWANATH STORES, 3/62 • **Near Old Bata,** RADIO SIGN, Netaji Subhash Road • **MIDNAPUR: Bara Bazar,** TRUNK HOUSE • **Bibiganj,** CHABRI ENTERPRISE, Near Rana Garage • **School Bazar,** DAS ELECTRONICS • **PURULIA: Near Telegraph Office,** MONIKA, Chai Basa Road • **RAGHUNATHGANJ: Bazarpara,** PRABHAT STORES (DULU'S DUKAN) • **Sadar Ghat,** SUKANTA, Municipal Super Market • **SERAMPUR: Battala,** BEST, 79, G.T. Road • **Opposite Manasi Cinema,** EAST END TRADERS, 39, N.S. Avenue • **SHEAKHALA: Sheakhala Bazar,** SHEAKHALA BASANALAYA • **SILIGURI: Alupatty,** NEELAM, Metal Market • **Bidhan Market,** GRIHASREE • NADIA STORES, B-3(R) • STAINLESS HOUSE, A/93 • **Hill Cart Road,** MAHESHWARI METAL STORES • **SIMURALI:** KUNDU BASANALAYA • **BODEPUR: Bidyasagar Corner,** PROYOJANI, Station Road • **SONAMUKHI: Rath Tala,** PAUL'S FURNITURE • **TAMLUK: Town Padumbasan,** TAMRALIPTA ALLUMINIUM STORES, Near Panskura Bus Stand • **TARAKESHWAR: BPR Gate,** SUPER SONIC RADIO • **ULUBERIA: Near Hemahta Basu Market,** RAKSHIT STEEL STORES, Uluberia Bazar • **UTTARPARA: Uttarpara Bazar,** TAPASI, 219, G.T. Road

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Bommai, Rama Rao and Singh: end of the good old days

BREAKING AWAY

Rama Rao's whimsical attitude has left him open to ridicule—even his colleagues are tired of his recurrent flip-flops and are uncertain of his ability to carry through the ambitious Bharat Desam.

ducted party meetings on the sets of *Viswamitra* in full make-up and costume on.

Now, when the layers of make-up peel off, the movie moghul will have to face a rapidly disintegrating National Front. Signs of the relationship having soured were evident long before the elections. Not only did Rama Rao fail to get the front to fight the 1989 elections on a common symbol, there were also differences on major issues. Like Mandal. V.P. Singh just brushed aside his suggestion that economic criteria be considered for reservations while his pet scheme of selling rice at Rs 2 a kg throughout the country was given short shrift once the National Front government was in place. On crucial matters like Ayodhya and the sacking of Devi Lal, Rama Rao was ignored completely. Comments TDP MP, P. Upendra, who was once Rama Rao's right-hand man: "Rama Rao felt he could have played a role in setting right the internal tussle in the Janata Dal. But his counsel was not sought."

Rama Rao retaliated in kind. Unilaterally, the TDP chief decided his party would not oppose Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in the Nandyal by-election. "It is a matter of Telugu pride," declared Rama Rao. The National Front leadership was left with no option but to back the chairman's decision. Predictably, the Congress(I) made the most of the disarray in the opposition camp, praising him for according the "final burial" to the front. And Rama Rao added insult to injury by publicly denouncing the front.

But if his strategy has worked to diminish the strength of the front, Rama Rao's revival of the Bharat Desam plan has not done much to help his image at home. The announcement comes at a time when his own charisma has touched the lowest ebb since his political career began in 1982.

THE TDP sits in the opposition benches in his home state. And the recent by-election results don't hold much promise for a change in the near future—the TDP lost both the Parliament seats and the four assembly seats to the Congress(I). Remarks Ashok Gajapathi Raju, TDLP deputy leader: "When the party leader's charisma is not working in Andhra Pradesh, it certainly can't work outside the state."

Rama Rao's recently-acquired admiration for Narasimha Rao can only damage his party's image further. For not only has he built the TDP on slogans of Telugu pride like *Telugalu Atma Gauravam* but on a strong anti-Congress sentiment. As Chadrababu Naidu points out: "Our base is the anti-Congress(I) votes. That is our credibility." It is for this reason that Rama Rao cannot now afford to dally with the Congress(I) without severely jeopardising his credibility.

As it is, the Bharat Desam idea has left Rama Rao open to ridicule from his own partymen. His whimsical attitude and flagging cinematic appeal after the flop of *Maharshi Viswamitra* has not helped. Once seen as the supreme leader of the TDP, Rama Rao now has to do all he can to keep party unrest in check. His once-trusted lieutenant, P. Upendra, has fallen out with him while leaders like Renuka Choudhury can barely conceal their displeasure. Party workers too complain bitterly of the autocratic attitude of his sons-in-law, Venkateshwara Rao and Naidu, who run the organisation.

Janata Dal leader R.K. Hegde sums up the situation, saying: "The Bharat Desam idea is not workable because Rama Rao does not have the kind of clout he wielded earlier. He is as confused as ever." A sentiment TDP functionary Raghuma Reddy agrees with. Describing his announcement as "an emotional outburst to counter his being sidelined in the front", he observes: "If we really have to launch the Bharat Desam, we have to first set things right here; we have to give our people confidence before talking business."

Rama Rao realises that. He knows he can no longer count on the anti-Congress(I) mantra for the success of his latest brainchild; he needs to broaden his base if his Bharat Desam is to be taken seriously. The pioneer of the National Front should prove equal to the task, that is, when he emerges from the sets of *Samrat Asoka*. Meanwhile, front leaders wait with trepidation as the arch destroyer readies for his dance of death.

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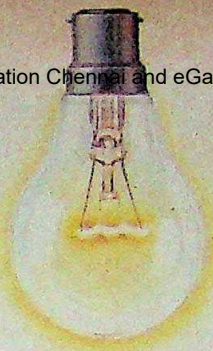
EDISON



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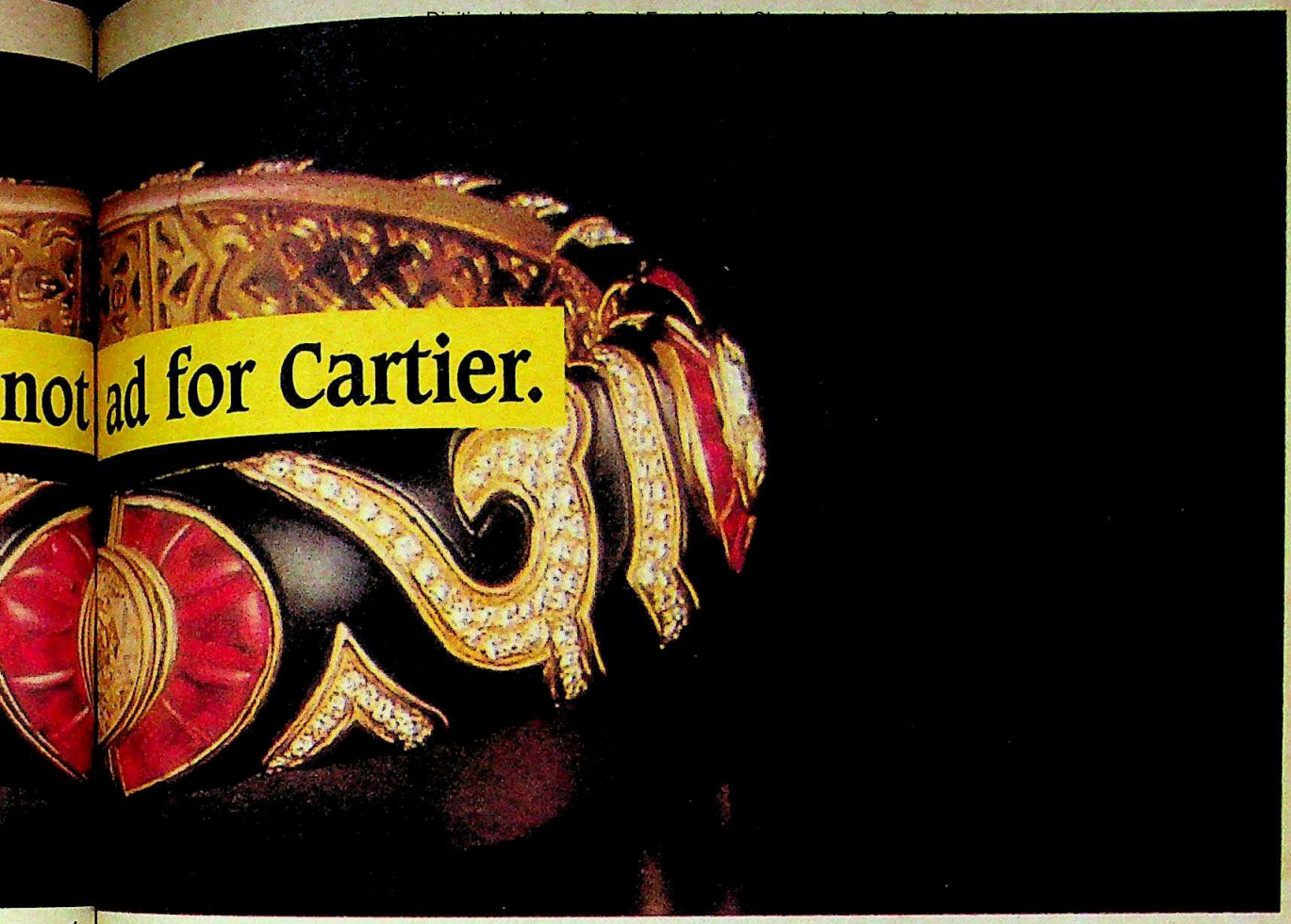

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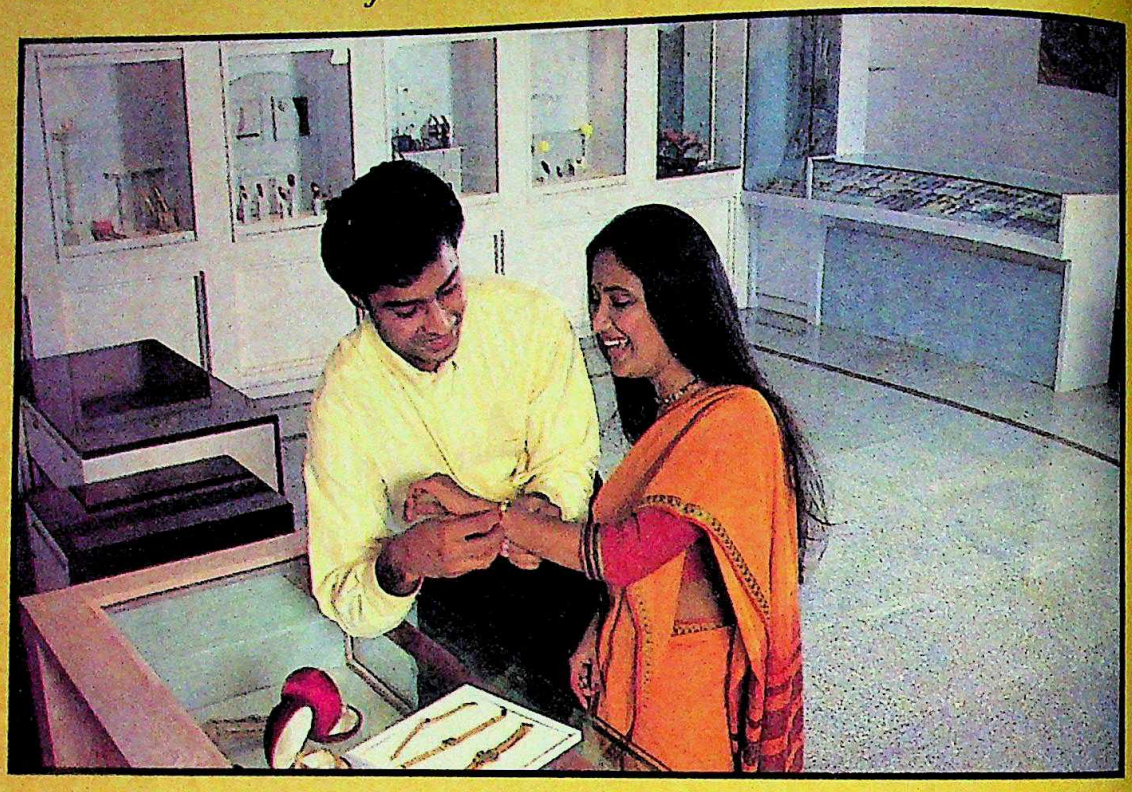

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INDIA TODAY

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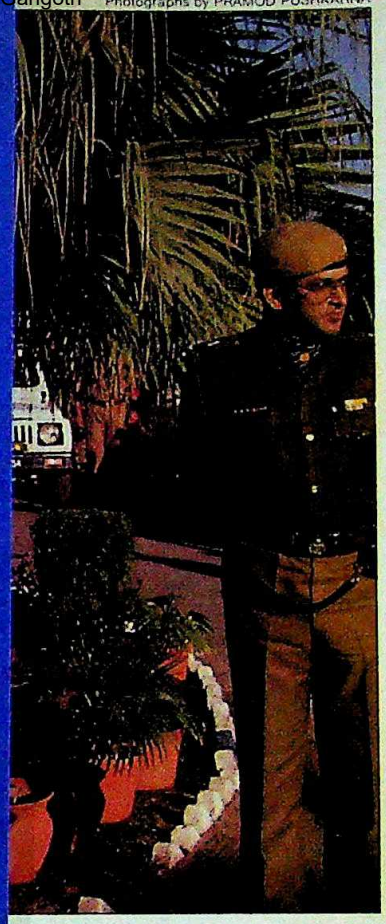
AND NOW WHAT?

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



dy the state for elections

olence has increased.

Known for his dare-devilry courage d leadership qualities, Gill flew to mritsar where he accompanied his en on night patrols. He also outlined peration Election for his district chiefs. s plan is to drive away the militants om Ropar, Patiala, Sangrur, Ludhi-na and Jalandhar areas into Amritsar nd Gurdaspur districts where they will e engaged in encounters. Accordingly, e has reinforced the force strength in opar, Sangrur and the sensitive vil-ges around Amritsar and Tarn Taran.

A problem area for Gill, however, is he demoralisation in Punjab Police llowing large-scale killings of police-en and their families. He has to boost s morale. But, unlike in his last ten-re, he cannot afford to shut his eyes to olice high-handedness. Because, in he run-up to the elections he has to estore the confidence of Punjabis.

And that confidence lies in tatters. Many inspectors, SHOs and deputy su-perintendents are virtually competing with the militants in running extortion ackets. Common also are fake en-ounters and harassment of those who arbour militants under duress.

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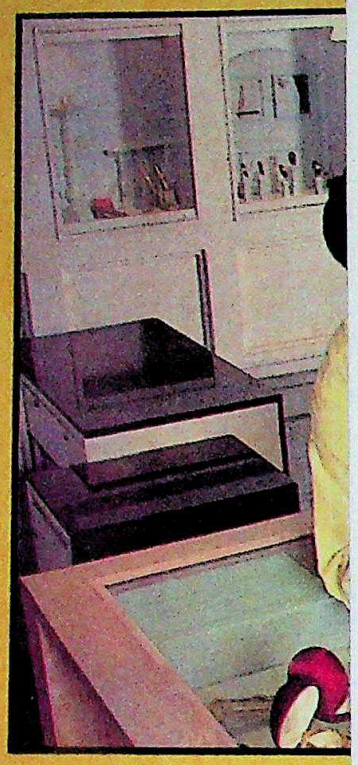

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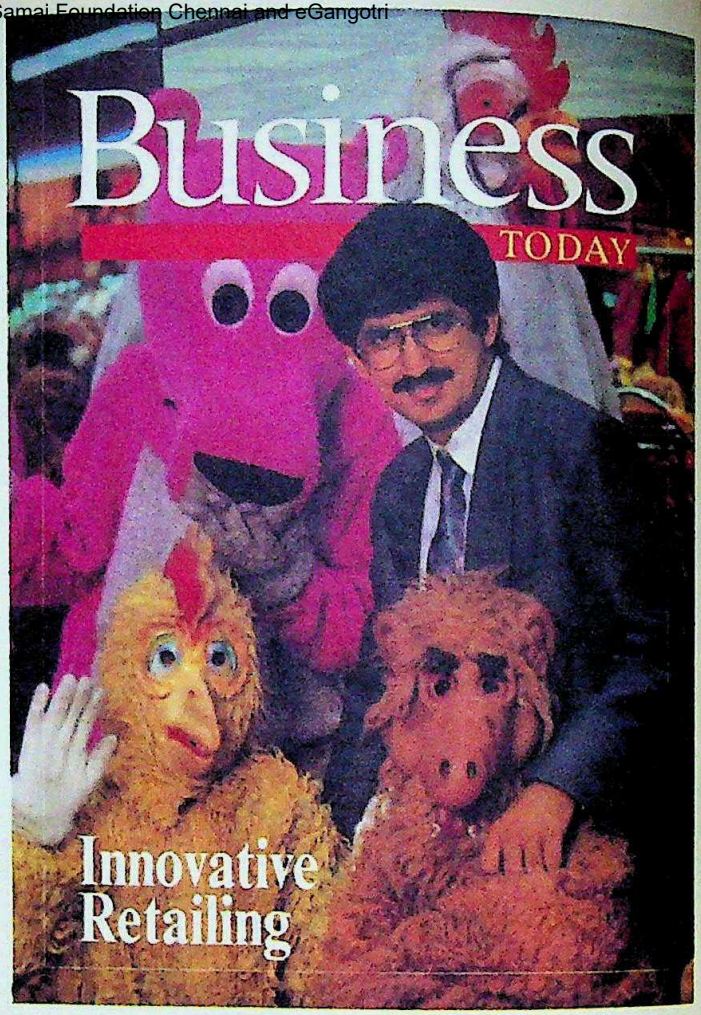

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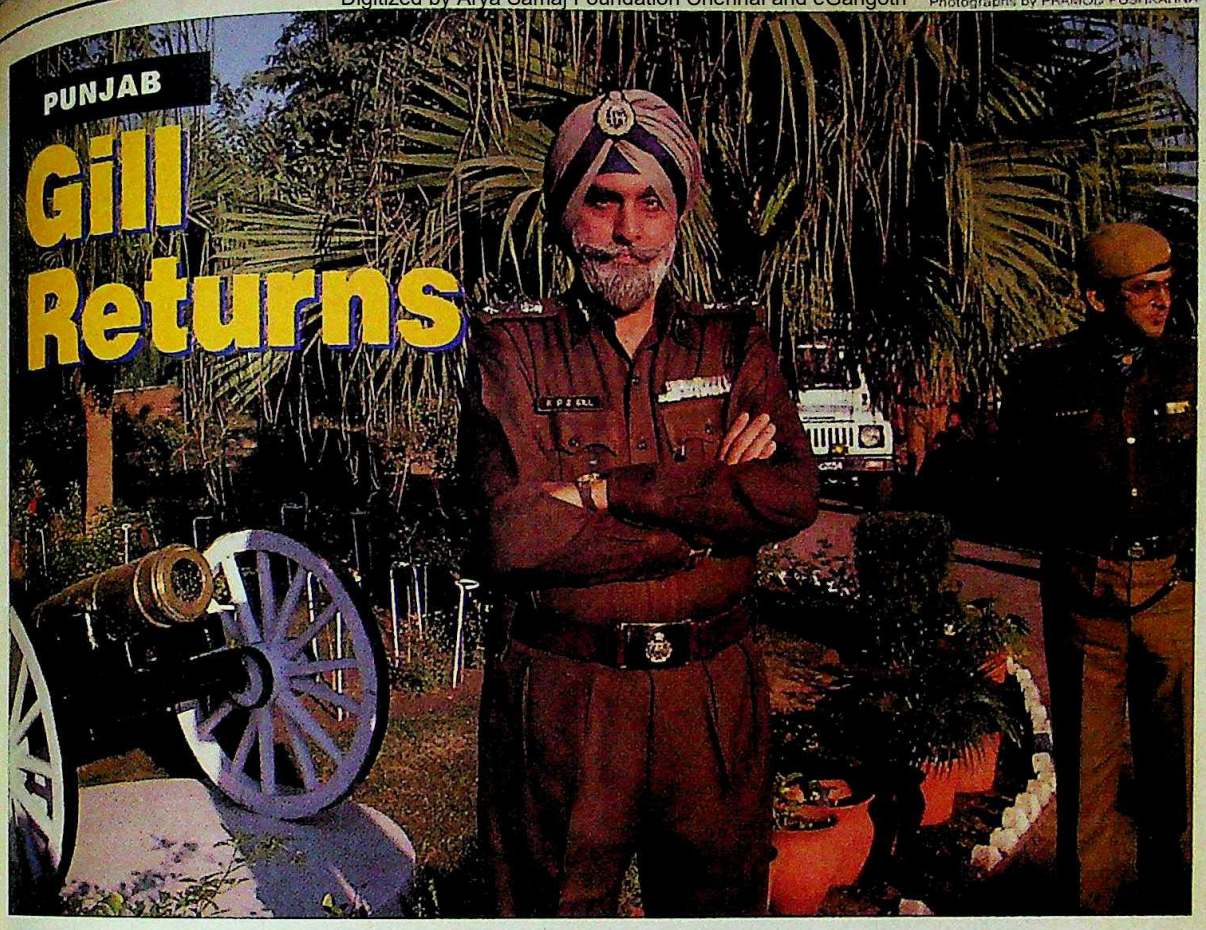
PUNJAB

Gill Returns



The controversial supercop will need more than pluck to ready the state for elections

By HARINDER BAWEJA

THE man provokes extreme reactions, and most of these are in evidence as McArthur-like he makes good his promise and returns to his favourite arena, Punjab. While the state police rejoice at the return of a chief who leads from the front and stands up for them, the bureaucracy is bristling at the re-emergence of an officer who treats senior officials with cavalier disdain. And while the terrorists take guard against a formidable adversary, the governor is sulking about a DGP who thinks and acts as if he were the governor-general.

Kanwar Pal Singh Gill, the 6 ft 3 inch fire-breathing supercop, has arrived to take up the most challenging police post in the country. And his presence is already being felt.

His brief from the Centre is clear. He has to prepare the ground for conducting the long overdue elections. In his daunting task, he has the unequivocal support of the Centre and the army which is fanning out into the villages. Gill, in his typical hands-on style, has already worked out his strategy. He will wage war against the militants and will brook no unnecessary official interference from any quarter.

The reason why the Centre fell back on Gill too is clear. It could not go on turning a blind eye to the deteriorating situation in the state. As a Home Ministry official pointed out: "The Congress(I) Government cannot postpone the elections again." Besides, the state Congress(I) leaders had expressed their inability to participate in the elections if the Centre itself was seen as weak-kneed. Gill was chosen because his last stint was considered fairly successful. Operation Black Thunder under him also went smoothly. He was posted out as director-general of CRPF 11 months ago by the Chandra Shekhar government because it was secretly negotiating with the militants and saw Gill as an irritant.

Getting down to work, Gill showed that he harboured no illusions about the reality on the ground. He told his officers: "The terrorists have advanced while the police has stood still." They now operate from 12 of the 15 police districts. Finding new recruits, militant groups are mushrooming and violence has increased.

Known for his dare-devilry courage and leadership qualities, Gill flew to Amritsar where he accompanied his men on night patrols. He also outlined Operation Election for his district chiefs. His plan is to drive away the militants from Ropar, Patiala, Sangrur, Ludhiana and Jalandhar areas into Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts where they will be engaged in encounters. Accordingly, he has reinforced the force strength in Ropar, Sangrur and the sensitive villages around Amritsar and Tarn Taran.

A problem area for Gill, however, is the demoralisation in Punjab Police following large-scale killings of policemen and their families. He has to boost its morale. But, unlike in his last tenure, he cannot afford to shut his eyes to police high-handedness. Because, in the run-up to the elections he has to restore the confidence of Punjabis.

And that confidence lies in tatters. Many inspectors, SHOs and deputy superintendents are virtually competing with the militants in running extortion rackets. Common also are fake encounters and harassment of those who harbour militants under duress.

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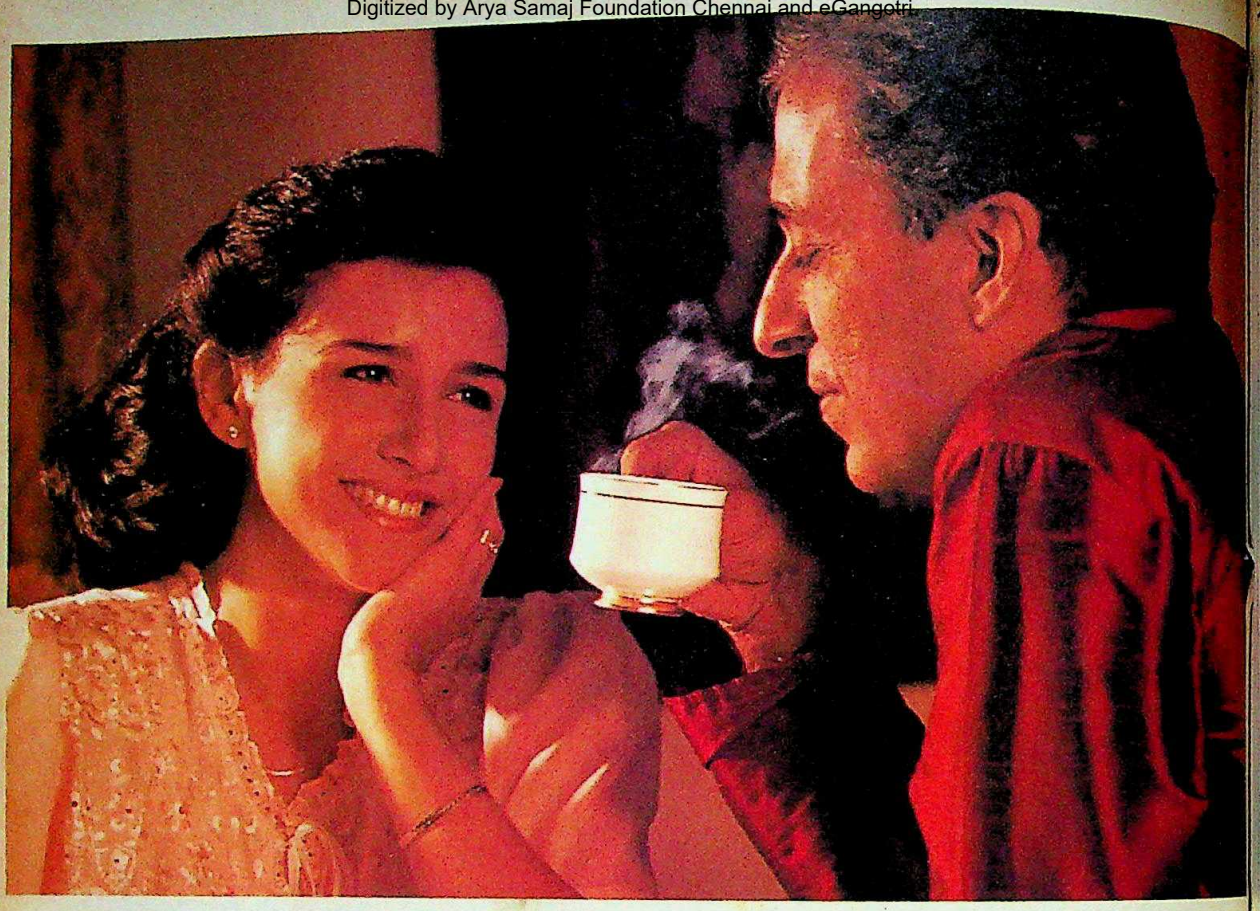

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Gill is prudent this time. Earlier he had even snubbed former governor Veerendra Verma who had complained that police actions were pushing youths into militants gangs. Gill had retorted: "My officers don't die shaking hands with the militants." But in the two meetings that he and Governor Surendra Nath have had with police officials, he too cautioned his men against fake encounters and mixing up militant sympathisers with those who are coerced into providing shelter.

Another obstacle in Gill's march will be the state bureaucracy. They tried stalling his posting for two reasons. One, it will be counter-productive. As one senior bureaucrat said: "It speaks volumes for the Centre's unimaginative handling of a sensitive issue. Punjab can do without a firefighting mission headed by Gill." The fear is that his force will end up doing what the army's Operation Woodrose did: alienate the people.

Secondly, as another IAS officer observed: "With Gill in the saddle, even deputy commissioners feel they are answerable to the district police chiefs." The governor—who had resisted Gill's posting—calling at the DGP's house in Delhi does not augur well for the bureaucracy.

The Akalis—the political group that matters most in the state—are also dead-set against Gill's return. While Prakash Singh Badal sees the move as "yet another way of repressing the Sikhs", Simranjit Singh Mann has decided to boycott the polls fearing that the Centre will use Gill to rig the elections.

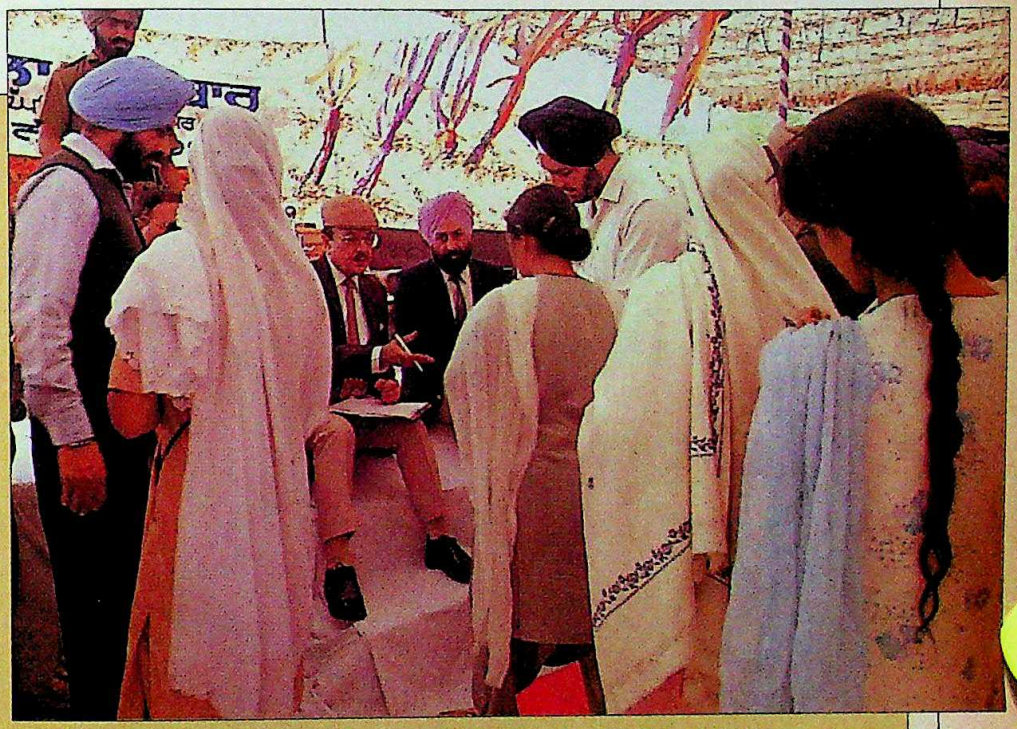
With so many factors arrayed against him this time, Gill will need more than his customary courage and arrogance to succeed. For, even if the elections are seen through by the presence of the army, it is he who will eventually have to face the militant guns which a popular state government will hardly be able to keep silent for long. His task is, indeed, doubly challenging, for he needs to be firm and yet keep the people on his side. ■

KHULA DARBAR

Courting People

HE limped up to the dais with the help of his crutches, hoping this time his plea would be heard. Tarsem Singh had come to Ghirinda village to attend the open darbar being addressed by Punjab Governor Surendra Nath. His plea: he wanted a job. He wasn't the only one. There was Amar Singh who wanted a waiver on the loan with which he'd bought his buffaloes. And Balbir Singh and his wife who were seeking action against the police who they alleged killed their 'innocent' son.

The Khula Lok Darbar scheme was set up by Nath soon after he took over office in August this year. Says he: "The open darbar is one way of sensitising the administration." Moreover, everywhere he tells the people: "It is not my darbar. My officers and I have come to your darbar." And in all the five darbars he has attended so far, he has spelled out the rationale behind the idea: to give the people of the state under President's rule for the last four-and-a-half years a forum to air their grievances. And to give the police force a civil face.



Nath with officials: more demands than complaints

But persuading people to come forward with their complaints isn't always easy. Nath tells the public: "Some people have told me you are scared of complaining against the police. The police is doing a difficult job but that doesn't mean they should trouble the innocents. That, definitely, is not my policy." With that he sits down on the steps of the stage as the complainants queue up before him.

The complaints are related to everyday needs. People want land problems settled, more schools, or increased water and electricity supply. Employment is another major concern and the youth are not averse to working for the Government. Interestingly, the darbar reveals that the people of Punjab want the state to go to the polls.

The darbars also bring out some uncomfortable truths. Such as the fact that the people have lost faith in the administration and are scared of the police. Only a handful dare to talk about the corrupt side that the force has repeatedly shown. This is especially true of the border districts of the state. Interestingly, not a single person has complained against the militants. Says Nath: "The battle is for the minds of the people." And for that, he will have to give the Punjab Police a kinder face. Definitely not an easy job.

—HARINDER BAWEJA in Amritsar

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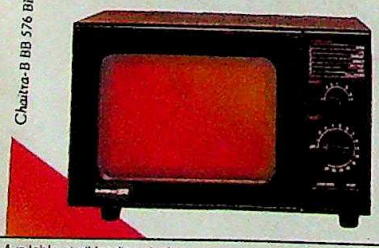

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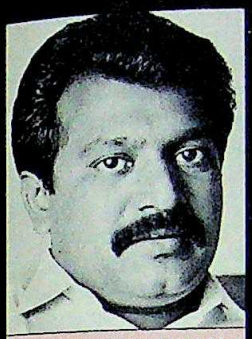
RAJIV ASSASSINATION

Conspiracy Surfaces



PIRABHAKARAN

Investigations by the SIT and 'Q' Branch of the Tamil Nadu Police, reveal that Rajiv Gandhi's killing was part of a larger plot to form a greater eelam. Its implications for the Government could be many.

POTTUAMMAN

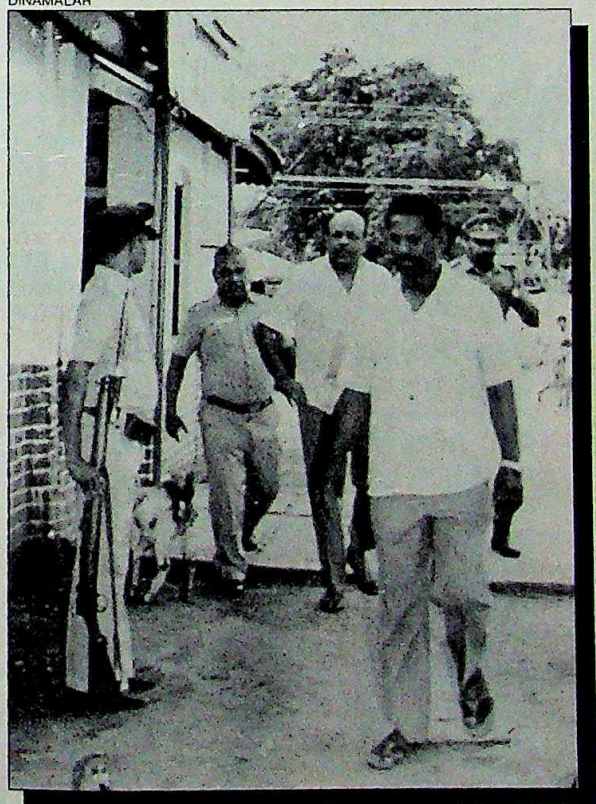
By ANIRUDHYA MITRA

In a series of swift moves, the highlight of which was last fortnight's arrest of former Tamil Nadu home secretary R. Nagarajan, investigators tracking the Tamil Tigers' trail believe they have unearthed a conspiracy bigger than anyone had ever imagined. For, if evidence collected by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) as well as the 'Q' Branch of the state police is anything to go by, Rajiv Gandhi's assassination was only one skein of a grand design to form a greater *eelam* comprising north-eastern Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu. The infiltration by the LTTE had spread deep within the structures of several political parties, the state Government, its police and intelligence departments.

It is likely that the probe will now go far beyond merely establishing the conspiracy behind Rajiv's assassination. This could have long-term consequences for India's approach towards the Sri Lankan separatists, particularly as the investigators are considering issuing warrants against LTTE supremo V. Pirabhakaran, intelligence chief Pottuamman, ideologue Baby Subramaniam, among others, for plotting to kill Rajiv Gandhi. This will be followed by a request to Colombo to extradite these rebels. In political terms, the move will be significant as it will have a bearing on any effort by Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa to enter into a dialogue with Pirabhakaran.

Working separately, on the basis of evidence discovered so far, the SIT and 'Q' Branch charge that from January 1990 onwards, the LTTE, playing on the Tamil sympathies of the DMK and its allies, the DK, Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), and the Tamil Vidudalai Padai (TVP), involved many of their leaders in several subversive acts. According to the investigators, the organisation's network, established in Tamil Nadu under the leadership of master-strategist Sivarasan, was waiting to carry out a series of assassinations which was to hit at Rajiv Gandhi, Jayalalitha Jayaram, and TNCC(I) President Vazhapadi Ramamurthi. When the M. Karunanidhi government was dissolved in January this year, and comebacks by Rajiv Gandhi and Jayalalitha seemed imminent, the LTTE rushed the pace of its plans.

DINAMALAR



Nagarajan's arrest has scared the DMK

ROT AT THE TOP: While the SIT has mentioned many politicians—including a Rajya Sabha member, former state ministers and former MLAs—as co-accused in a charge-sheet which it is currently preparing, the 'Q' Branch has started arresting some of them under TADA and NSA. In many cases, point out sources, these politicians were fully aware of LTTE's dream of a greater *eelam*.

But they were not alone in succumbing to the wonderful vision. Investigators say the LTTE made inroads in the law and order machinery of the state, not sparing even the Intelligence Department, as several letters seized from LTTE hideouts testify. Nor was Nagarajan the only senior

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official under suspicion. SIT officials suspect that some senior police officers of the state too were caught in a double-game. Worse, they claim, in many cases, politicians and government officials acted in tandem to ensure that the LTTE guerrilla machine was always in working order.

Several instances of lapses, intentional or unintentional, have been discovered. For instance, on November 6, 1989, 12 armed militants were heading towards Ramnathapuram coast in two Gypsies. When the convoy was questioned by two police constables at a check-post on the outskirts of Trichy, the militants shot at them, killing one policeman on the spot. Another 80 km down the road, the convoy was halted again by a police team. The militants brandished their weapons. The police didn't force the issue. And the matter was never investigated. Again on February 11, 1989, a Railway Police Force constable, V. Ravi, was shot by two LTTE men on a train near Chengalpattu railway station. Within five minutes of the incident, the militants fled. The incident was recorded by the police, but never investigated.

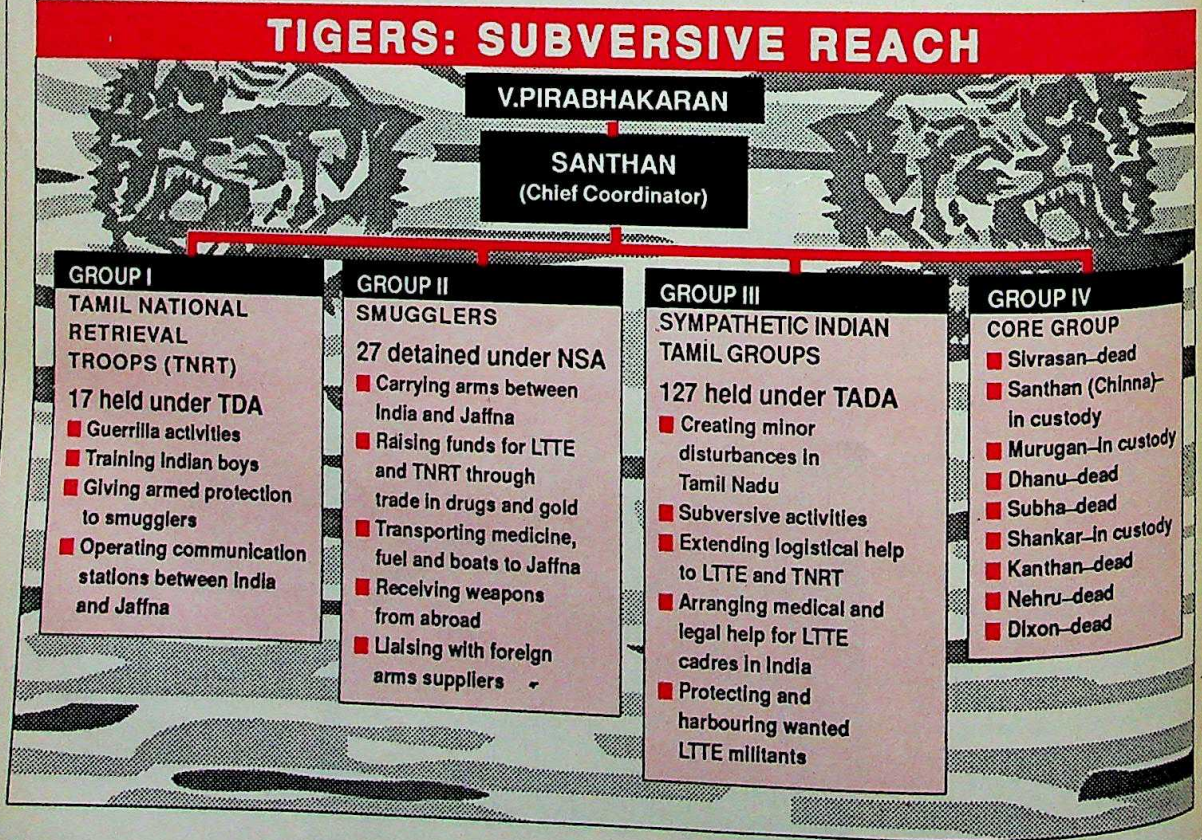
But by far the most glaring of these near-misses was on June 12, 1990. A group of militants led by Sivarasan and his associate Santhan, who is now in police custody, left the Madras spot where EPRLF leader K. Padmanabha, along with 14 others, was shot. After two slips, the police had one entire day during which the militants freely moved in and around Trichy. But the police chose to ignore, or maybe did not know of, the militants' activities. The Tigers not only switched cars but also parked at Santhan's house in Trichy for a night. On June 14, while the militants waited for three hours on the Ramnathapuram coast for a boat to take them to Jaffna, the locals even provided them rice and fish. The police arrived on the scene but only an hour after they had left, and made a token arrest of two local fishermen who had cooked for the LTTE men. When the then DGP appeared on television that night to announce the arrests, he chose not to mention the identity of the two prisoners. The case was reopened last month only after the Sivarasan nexus was discovered.

MEN AND MONEY: While on Sivarasan's scent, the investigators uncovered much of the Tigers' trail in India. And discovered they were rearing Indian cubs. With its October 1 arrest of 17 Tamil National Retrieval Troops (TNRT) men from Dindigul, who were among the 1,000 or more Indians trained by the LTTE in Jaffna, the 'Q' Branch discovered that the LTTE had been providing them with logistical back-up to combat the Sri Lankan and Indian governments. They are believed to have been trained at Palai in Jaffna, by Pottuamman's lieutenant Sashikumar. Some of the TNRT were even used, for the first time in August this year, to fight the Sri Lankan Army in LTTE's battle to retain Elephant Pass, according to the confessions of Ravichandran, alias Ravi, and Mahesh—the TNRT leader and his deputy who were picked up in Dindigul.

With the return of TNRT to India in January this year, the Tigers used it, as well as its network of smugglers, to stock arms and ammunition. Some of the haul was unearthed in July and August: arms, explosives and wireless sets at Kodaikadu reserve forests near Vedaranyam and at Ramnad, a recently set-up supply point for logistical support to Jaffna. A hand grenade factory in Coimbatore and an explosives godown near Nellore in Andhra Pradesh, which led to the arrests of three LTTE sympathisers, Ganesh, Raghu and Srinivasan, in Vijayawada on August 9 were also located.

The Tigers also fine-tuned their communications network. They used public telephone booths for STD or ISD calls and organised fax facilities at some service centres. This came in particularly handy when the Sri Lankan and Indian Navy started intercepting their messages after Rajiv's assassination. The LTTE had set up an elaborate VHF wireless system all

Chart by PRANAB DUTTA



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over Tamil Nadu and in some parts of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to maintain quick contact. Dixon, who later committed suicide, was put at the apex of the operation while Vicky and Raghu, who were picked up in July, assisted him.

In order to ensure trouble-free transit for its cadres, the LTTE financed travel agencies in Madras, Trichy, Coimbatore, Bangalore, Tuticorin, New Delhi, Bombay, and Calcutta and passport dealers in Trichy, Madras, Bombay and Delhi—where the CBI arrested three militants for forging passports and visas. Two of them were Sri Lankans, D.P. Ranasinghe and Kamal Vikram Ranasinghe, while one was an Indian Tamil, Chandravati. The Tigers also financed automobile dealers to ensure secrecy in buying and hiring vehicles. The 'Q' Branch has hauled up many such dealers following the arrest of Dhanasekharan, known as a DK sympathiser. According to the investigators, DK and TVP sympathisers helped to a great extent in aiding these LTTE enterprises. But DK leader K. Veeramani thinks that such reports are "calculated to malign his party." Though he may sympathise with the Tamil cause, he denies point-blank involvement in militant activities.

As for supply of weapons, investigation reveals that the LTTE owns a number of ships which transport arms from various suppliers in western Europe to Jaffna, sailing under flags of Honduras, Cyprus, Panama, St Kitts, Thailand, Saint Vincent and Cayman Islands among others. Recently, the Indian Navy intercepted a ship named *Tongnova*, but the investigators could not tell whether the ship was Sinhala or Malaysian. But some LTTE militants, members of a group called 'Sea Birds' were hauled up from it. The Indian Government, through Interpol, is taking up the matter with countries whose flags are being used as decoys. Malaysian authorities have already been sounded out and they deny the involvement of any private shipping company in militant activities.

As for the all-important fuel, money, the LTTE has had no lack of it. Most of its funds were funnelled through havala dealers, mainly in Delhi and Bombay. One such spot operation was recently busted at a Paharganj guest-house, Krishna Lodge, in Delhi. Along with two LTTE members, Santhanan and K. Vellu, over $18,000—all counterfeit—were seized. According to the SIT, LTTE spokesman Kittu, currently based in Geneva, is the brain and brawn behind this smooth flow of funds. In fact, it was for coercive collection of money and irregular dealing in foreign funds that the UK Government expelled him. A message from Dixon suggested that Kittu used BCCI, London, as a conduit. That was before the bank came apart like a house of cards.

LTTE ships, such as *Tongnova*, pose as merchant vessels

PULLING OUT THE ROOTS: Nagarajan's arrest under TADA was only the most public of steps the SIT and state police has taken to twist the Tigers' tail. Among the charges against Nagarajan, one links him to Padmanabha's killing. Not just two Sri Lankan nationals, recently arrested in Trichy for helping the LTTE to store and transport arms, but also two senior police officers have made statements against him. According to sources, T.S. Radhakrishnan—now Chengalpattu SP—who was DCP (law and order) Madras, when the EPRLF killings took place, has said he was told by Nagarajan to take it easy on the probe. Similarly, as DIG of Ramnad, in February last year, G.S. Ramanan, who is now Coimbatore commissioner of police, was asked to return to his headquarters. He did, but then the LTTE militants he was about to capture got away.

Coming as it does so soon after the arrest of Ravichandran—brother of DMK member of Parliament V. Gopalasamy—on charges of harbouring militants, DMK cadres now fear that more arrests are on the anvil. Says a 'Q' Branch official: "We have a lot of information. We are working on it and once we get foolproof evidence, we will not spare anyone, however high and mighty." When Ravichandran was arrested, initially the DMK maintained a discreet silence but now Karunanidhi has openly attacked what he calls Chief Minister Jayalalitha's "vindictive attitude". But Jayalalitha is not one to fight shy of a bare-knuckled battle. As DGP of Tamil Nadu, S. Sripal, puts it: "The drive against the

TNRT chief 'Ravi', who was picked up in Dindigul

According to the two prisoners, the LTTE used some members of the 1,000-strong TNRT in the battle for Elephant Pass in Sri Lanka.

Mahesh, TNRT deputy chief, now in police custody

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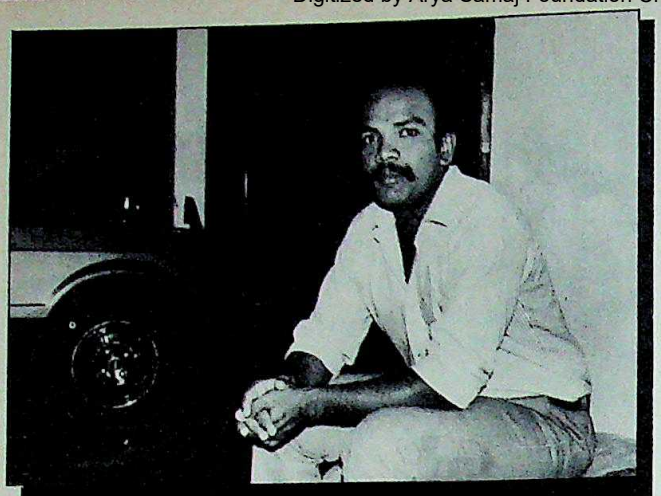


Kittu, believed to be behind the foreign network

LTTE will continue till its members are flushed out from all their sanctuaries in the state."

Already, the 'Q' Branch is said to be watching out for a former state DMK minister, who harboured chief controller of LTTE's Indian operations, Santhan, who committed suicide in Trichy recently to avoid being arrested; a former DMK member of Parliament from whose house Santhan communicated on the wireless to Jaffna; as well as DK supporter Kolatur Maniyam of Mettur who supplied speedboats to the militants in 1989-90.

So, the probe goes on. And at full speed. But the focus will now be on undermining the LTTE's vital international links. The CBI has started sending letters rogatory to countries known to have LTTE bases. The SIT, on the other hand, is looking for a "very important LTTE member" based in Switzerland, who handles money and arms purchases. Inquiries indicate that at least four branches (London, Cayman Islands, Panama and Frankfurt) of the BCCI and another bank in Singapore were used regularly to pay off arms dealers operating from Panama, Cyprus, Honduras, and Singapore. A CBI team will be visiting these countries to further probe the matter. Inquiries are also being made with banks to ascertain the LTTE's financial reach.

The newly set-up SIT office in the capital is coordinating with other agencies to get a handle on the enormous scale of LTTE's international dealings. But even six months after Rajiv Gandhi was killed and three months after the hunt for Sivarasan ended with one swallow of cyanide, the plot behind the assassination continues to grow in size and complexity. The LTTE in India may have been backed into a dark alley but it is still too early to tell whether it is a dead end.

—with KAVEREE BAMZAI

SIT EVIDENCE

Letter Leads

SIVARASAN may be dead, but he couldn't carry the 'clinching evidence' with him. Investigators say at least two documents they have unearthed would "prove that the assassination was ordered by Pirabhakaran".

The first clincher is a letter that the assassin, Dhanu, wrote to Pirabhakaran on May 10, 1991, from LTTE's Kodungaiyur hide-out. Thanking Pirabhakaran for entrusting her with the 'important' task, Dhanu details her successful dry-run on V.P. Singh in Madras on May 8.

The second piece of evidence is the letter—dated September 7—from Santhan, who was the LTTE's chief coordinator in India, to Pirabhakaran. It was intercepted when the Indian Navy arrested an LTTE courier, Irumburei. It shows him as being down, but still fighting. Excerpts:

My elder brother,

I am writing this letter amidst crisis. But we have not lost confidence. The CBI seems to have come to know everything about us following the arrest of so many of our members. All Pottuamman's boys got nabbed and that eventually led to the death of Raghuvaran (Sivarasan)....The arrest of Chinna Santhan helped the CBI to know about who killed Padmanabha....

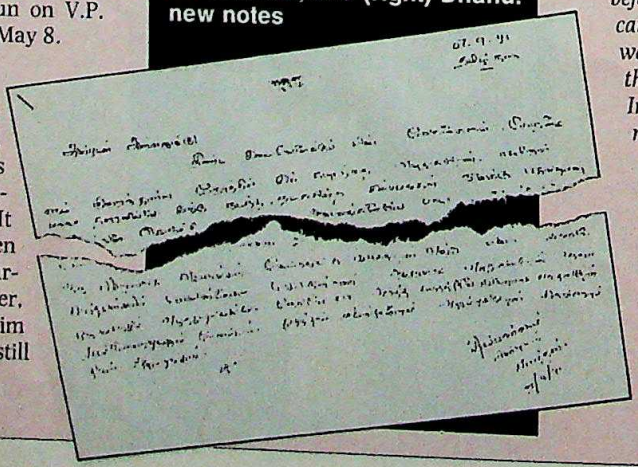
After seeing so many arrests, I had to distribute cyanide to all our boys.... As a result of my instruction/order, 25 of us have died. The situation here is just like what it was in Jaffna during the IPKF operation. Like our people hated to give the Indian soldiers water, the same treatment is being meted out to our activists.

I suggest that we have a smaller team to work here. I have waited several nights...no boat has come... how do I send goods? After the death of Rajiv, we were promised that boats will come once the election was over. But no boat came....

Send boats and wireless sets before some more of us get caught. If I get a wireless set, we can identify the arrival or the departure point. Or, tell Irumburei in detail. The arrest of Vardhan cut off my last link with you. Pottuamman's boys do not carry my message to you....The likely arrest of Kolatur Maniyam is worrying me as that would lead to many other Indians. The CBI cannot catch me. Have faith in me.

Yours,
Santhan

Santhan; and (right) Dhanu: new notes



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VARANASI

Fatal Indifference

Administration turns a blind eye, as Hindus and Muslims clash

R.K. GUPTA

Police patrolling the riot-torn Muslim-dominated Madanpura: too little, too late

THE temple bells in the city of saints were tolling for the dead last fortnight. And the echoes reverberated in Parliament. While the district administration in Varanasi chose to ignore the clamour, first Hindus and then Muslims went on a killing spree. At the end of a week, the toll was 19 and the BJP Government's image was further undermined.

It was a routine immersion of Kali idols on November 8 that caused the fracas. Part of it was because, unlike in the past, the procession was allowed to go through very crowded areas, unescorted by either Central or Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) forces. In fact, despite repeated requests for more protection from the organisers, the Nav Sangh Club, only a couple of sub-inspectors and some constables turned up for duty.

Alarm bells began to ring when processionists began chanting incendiary communal slogans. And when a breakaway group from the same club, led by BJP corporator Pushpanath Shukla, set off fireworks, no one stopped them. People from Muslim-dominated Madanpura objected. And, the situation got out of hand.

Some members of the procession rushed to nearby Gudaullia and spread rumours about assaults by Muslims. It was enough for the Hindus of Gudaullia and Jagambari to go berserk. People coming out of a nearby cinema hall were asked to identify themselves and those with Muslim names were killed. Brutally. With seven dead, the administration should have continued curfew till the fires were extinguished.

But it didn't. On November 13, the Home Department and the district administration relaxed curfew in nine city areas. The Muslims struck back just as curfew was about to be lifted. About 40 of them dragged those with Hindu names into Madanpura's narrow bylanes and stabbed them to death. The violence left 11 dead. The police looked the other way.

Worse, the administration allowed only BJP parliamentarian S.C. Dixit to travel around the curfew-bound town, refusing permission to other politicians. The Muslims were not reassured. And when the PAC entered Madanpura, Reori Talab and Dal Mandi—all Muslim areas—in pursuit of the rioters, it did nothing to ease the tension. Armed with stones and bombs, the Muslims attacked their pursuers. Even J.N. Pandey, SP, was not spared.

Then came the inevitable reports of PAC excesses. The beatings the Muslims received at its hands during the search of almost 2,000 houses—on November 14, 15 and 16—have left wounds which the death, in police custody, of local doctor and social worker, Dr Anis Ansari, only deepened. Says Raees Ansari, a weaver: "Our fears came true. With this Government, we'll be at the receiving end of the majority community and the official machinery."

But in an environment where communal positions have hardened, local sari merchant Saligram Gupta is for a tough line. With both Hindu and Muslim hotheads unrepentant, the signal being sent is anything but promising.

—DILIP AWASTHI

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LIVIU RADU

Free At Last

Kidnapping boomerangs

THE high-tension kidnap drama had a tame, almost anticlimactic denouement. Minutes after the Jhelum Express pulled up at New Delhi Railway Station at 10 a.m., Romanian Charge d'Affaires Liviu Radu stepped off the train like any other ordinary passenger. And then, the securitymen who were swarming the station after being informed of his release the previous night, took over. Quietly, they directed him to a waiting taxi that drove him to his Jor Bagh home, bringing to an end his 49-day ordeal in the captivity of Sikh militants.

Radu's return could not have been more unobtrusive. The result largely of international diplomatic pressure, it was clear the kidnap drama had backfired on the abductors, members of the Khalistan Commando Force. Intended to draw world attention to their "mission", the abductors finally gained little from the event. Said Radu after his release: "The Romanian Government made it very clear that under no circumstances would any Punjab militant be released from Romania. They shall be tried in Romania only." India, which also does not seem to have entered into any deal with the militants, learnt, at last, that taking a firm line pays.

Things started falling in place only after the Romanian Government approached Islamabad in mid-October—when the involvement of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence in the Sikh militants' attempt on the life of Julio Ribeiro, India's ambassador to Romania, came to light. Pressure was also mounted on Pakistan by other western nations. And about a fortnight after the kidnapping, the abductors realised their gameplan had gone awry.

Meantime, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) in India had set up a special control room to monitor the militants' calls to the Radu residence. They also left two control room telephone numbers with the family to be given to the abductors. But the militants never called the IB.

At this stage, one of the abductors, Dev Pal Singh, was shot by the Delhi Police in an encounter. Immediately, Radu was moved from the safe house in Sadiq Nagar, taken on rent by Dev Pal Singh, to the Nanak Piao Gurdwara in north Delhi. He was kept there for a week before being taken to Punjab through Singhu border.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Radu at a press meet after his release

The episode has proved that the Government can afford to stand firm on kidnappings.

All this while, sources say, neither the IB nor the Delhi Police had any information about his whereabouts. After Dev Pal Singh was killed, the militants' stopped their calls to the Radu home and to contacts in Delhi. That put an end to the IB's line-tapping. Even a search of the Sadiq Nagar house did not yield positive clues.

Finally, it was talks with other militants that indicated Dev Pal Singh's association with Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala. A hunt was launched for him. And it was learnt that Budhsinghwala had already crossed the Indo-Pak border along with two associates, one of them a coach with the Sports Authority of India. Efforts were made to establish contact with him in Pakistan with the help of informers. Later, two of the abductors, Hari Singh Khalsa and Sharma, were picked up in Delhi on a tip-off by the Punjab Police.

Diplomatic parleys followed at the international level. To the Indian security agencies one thing was clear: that Radu was safe and the militants would not harm him. From then on, the entire episode took a political turn. The militants tried to convey that their mission was not just to secure the release of General A.S. Vaidya's killers but to tell the world that it was in retaliation to the Romanian Government arresting those who tried to kill Julio Ribeiro, a person unacceptable to the militants, in Bucharest.

Two significant developments followed. US Under Secretary of State for International Security Affairs, Reginald Bartholomew, arrived in New Delhi on November 21 from Islamabad. And the Pakistan-based Second Panthic Committee (Sohan Singh faction) announced Radu's release on November 24. With the green signal given from across the border, militants in Punjab informed the police that Radu would be released the next day without mentioning either the exact time and place.

Says an elated Radu: "Being an optimistic man, I never lost hope. Except that I was little worried about my health. But then my captors arranged for medicines as well as newspapers and periodicals which kept me up-to-date. They never told me about their mission." The "mission" itself had boomeranged badly on the abductors. Not only has it given the organisation a bad name internationally, it has made it plain to Indian security agencies that succumbing to kidnappers' demands is not the only way out. In fact, in at least three recent cases of kidnapping in Kashmir, the hostages have been released unharmed and ostensibly, without any deal having taken place. For the Government, this should be a lesson well learnt.

—ANIRUDHYA MITRA

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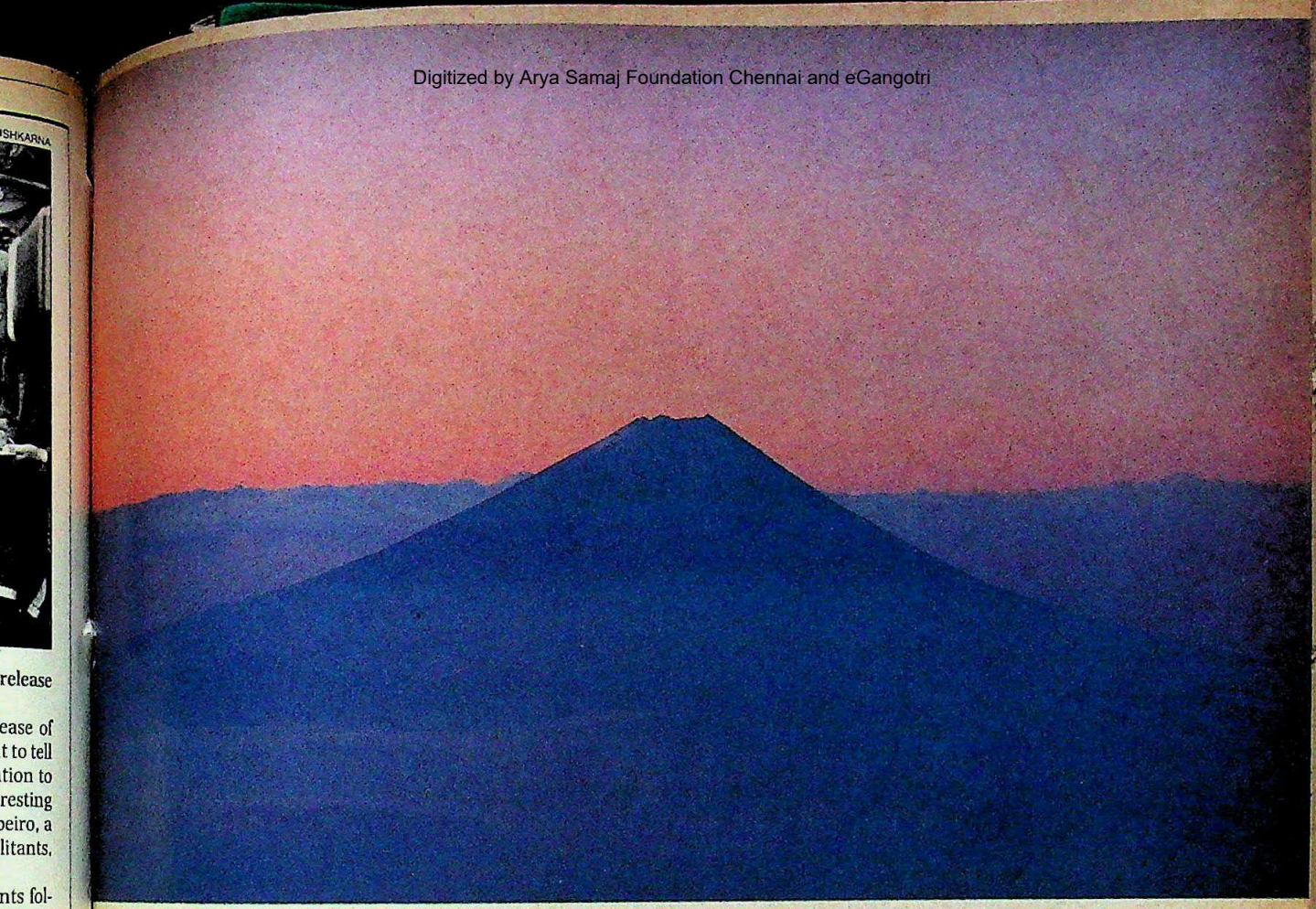

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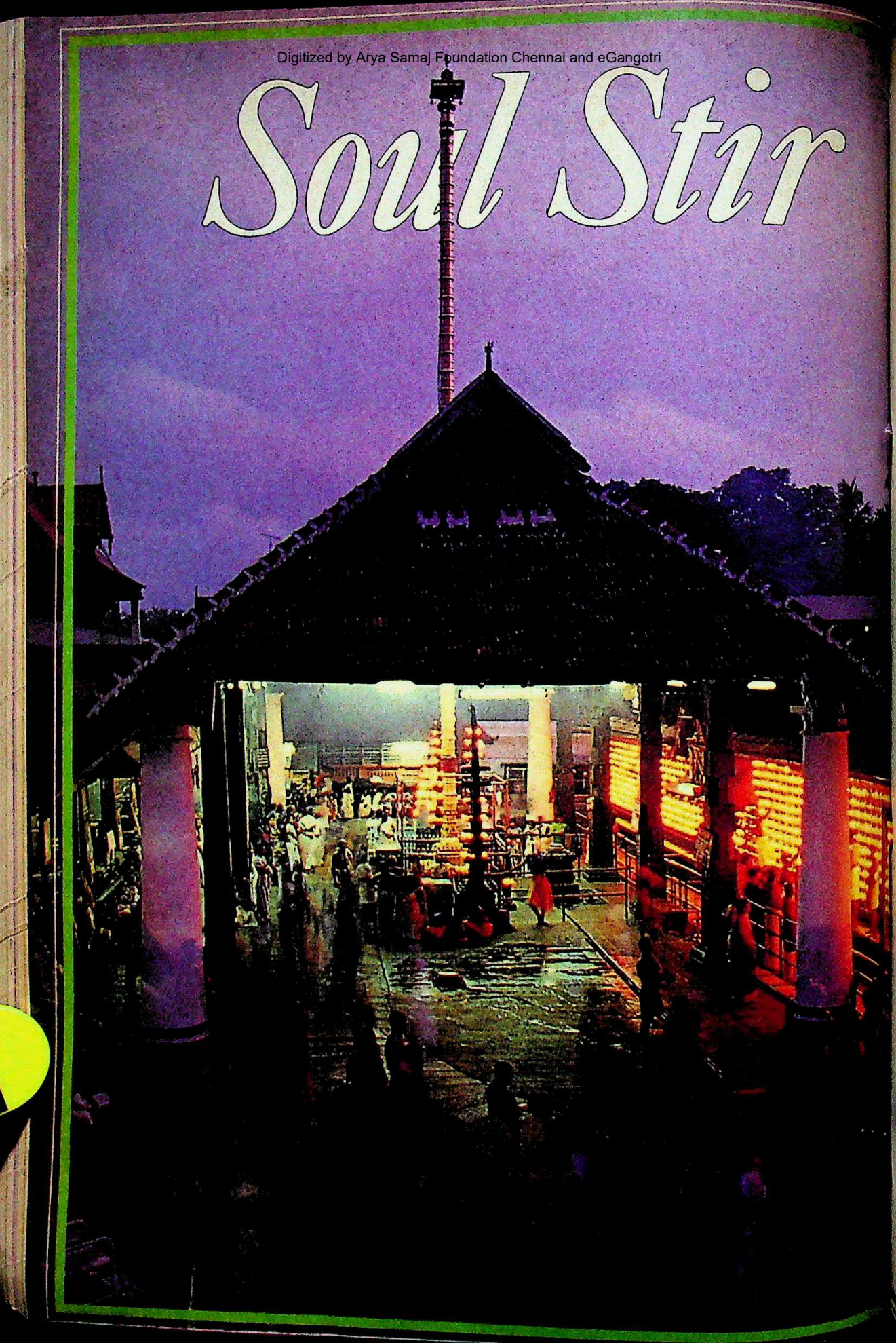
Soul Stir



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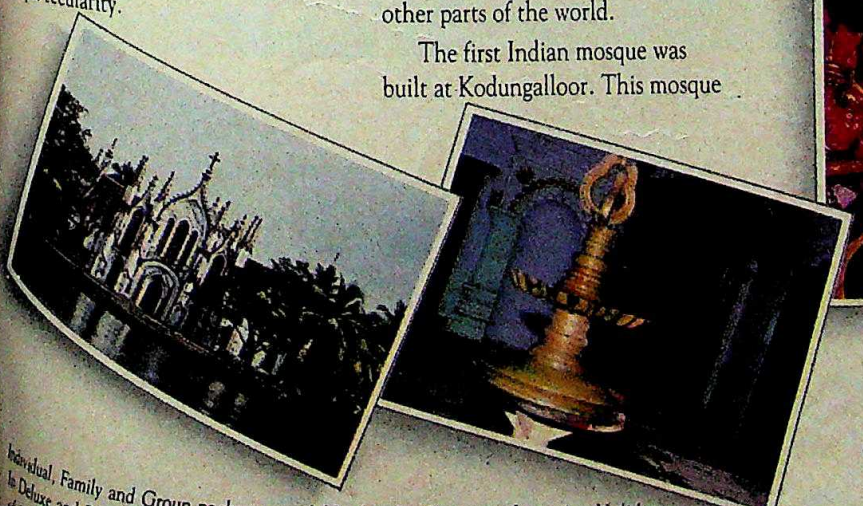

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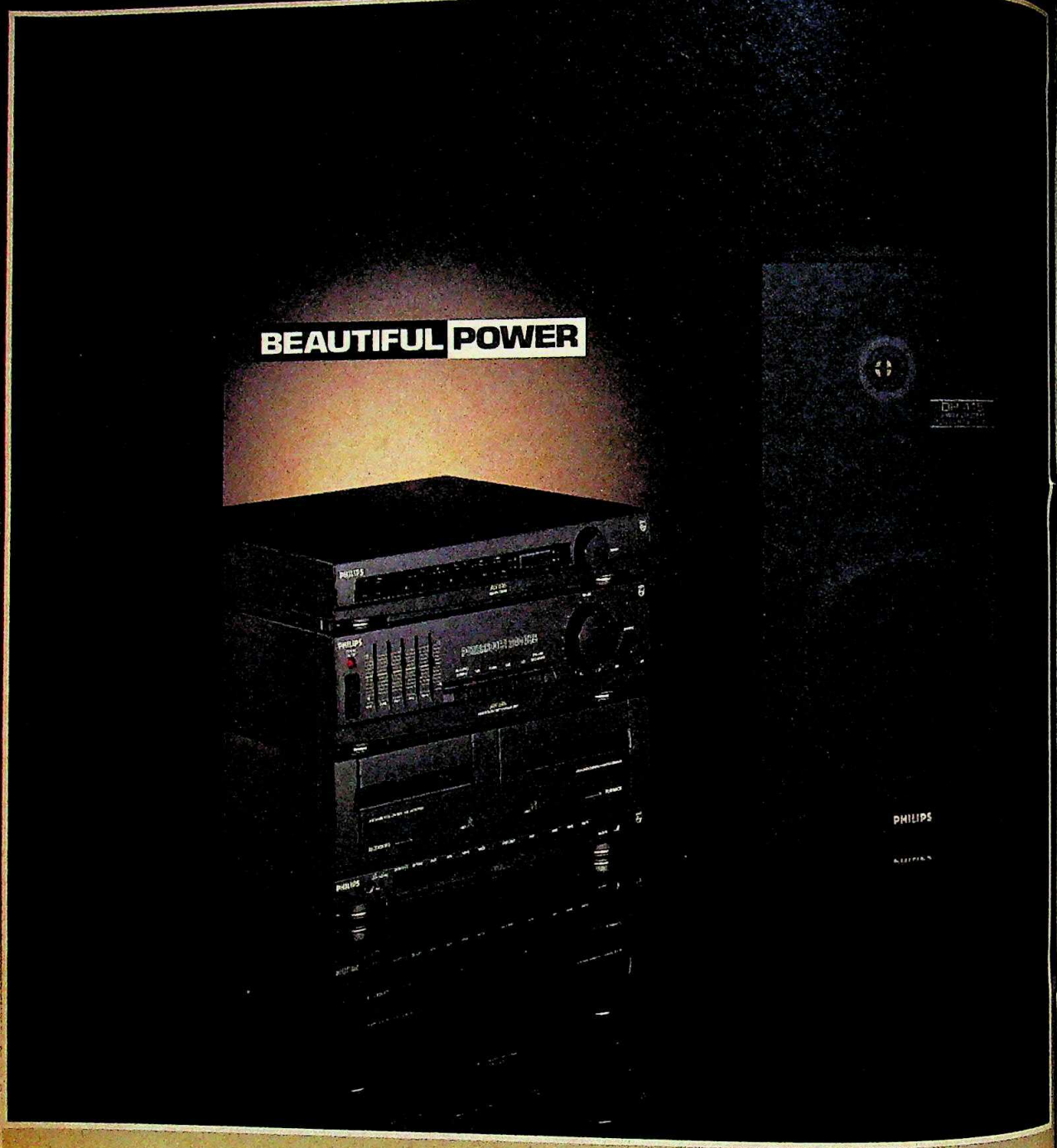

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Narasimha Rao: record success

BY-ELECTIONS

Congress(I) Scores

BJP holds firm, Janata Dal loses ground

THE high-profile by-elections didn't spring any surprises. They merely confirmed the trends that emerged from the June elections. Of the 15 Lok Sabha and 57 assembly constituencies that went to the polls, the Congress(I) again emerged as the hands down winner from the south and the west. While the BJP further entrenched itself in the Hindi belt, the Janata Dal proved that Bihar is its pocket borough. And the Left Front remained untouched in West Bengal where it won the Purulia Lok Sabha seat.

The party most delighted with its performance was the Congress(I). Of the 15 parliamentary seats it contested, the Congress(I) won eight—though it was still 12 short of the majority mark. More importantly, it showed that it could hold its own without having to piggyback on the Gandhi name. The biggest winner was Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao—coasting through with a stupendous margin of 5.8 lakh votes, he even earned himself a place in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Apart from breaking records, Narasimha Rao also emerged out of the Gandhi family's shadows as a national leader whose consensus politics got a nod from the electorate in almost all the regions of the country. With Congressmen queueing up outside his office pledging their loyalty to the 'leader', he has left Sharad Pawar and Arjun Singh way behind in the leadership race.

However, the bad news for the party is that its performance in the Hindi belt was dismal. Barring Amethi, it drew a blank in all the 17 assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh. Stupefied UPCC(I) chief Mahavir Prasad tried to brush the party's failure under the rug and harped on its impressive performance at the national level instead.

PARTY POSITION IN LOK SABHA AFTER BY-ELECTIONS

CONGRESS(I)	231	WON 8
THE BJP	121	WON 2
JANATA DAL	59	WON 3

THE CONGRESS(I) STRENGTH WITH ITS ALLIES AND TWO NOMINATED MPs GOES UP TO 250, STILL 12 SHORT OF A MAJORITY.

Either way, the writing on the wall was clear. Unless the Congress(I) gets its organisational act together in Uttar Pradesh, the electorate will continue to reject it. Appallingly, the party which was defending three of the 17 Vidhan Sabha seats and one of the three Lok Sabha seats has just won one solitary Lok Sabha seat—Amethi, which in any case was a surefire winner. Admitted senior party leader, N.D. Tiwari: "We have to chalk out a strategy to fight and win elections which are based on a communal divide."

The defeat rankled all the more as even a small party like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) did better. In six of the seats—Harraiya, Bhognipur, Lakhna, Etawah, Bulandshahr and Khekra—the Congress(I) polled merely 10 per cent or less while the BSP fared much better.

That wasn't the only bad news for the Congress(I) though. With Mulayam Singh Yadav's SJP bagging five assembly seats and Kanshi Ram winning the Etawah parliamentary seat, the Congress(I) has lost another vote bank—the backward castes and the Harijans. Yet it made up in Bihar where the Congress(I) won two assembly seats—Vaishali and Sisai.

If the Congress(I) is still smarting from its poor showing in the Hindi belt, the BJP is simply elated with its

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performance there. Says party President Murli Manohar Joshi: "The by-elections confirm that the BJP is the only viable alternative to the Congress(I)." With Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh largely remining in its kitty, the party is now confidently surging ahead with plans to spread its net nationwide. In fact, Joshi's Ekta Yatra is a step in that direction.

If the party is bursting with confidence, it's because it feared a slide in its performance compared to the overwhelming success in the June elections. But its victory in one of the three Lok Sabha seats and 10 of the 17 Vidhan Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh, clearly indicates that the BJP's June showing was no flash in the pan.

Madhya Pradesh, on the other hand, threw up no surprises for the ruling BJP. The party retained the Vidisha Lok Sabha seat. And of the five assembly constituencies that went to the polls, it retained the one and only seat that it controlled. As a result, its tally remained the same.

If the BJP was cruising along elsewhere, the only state where it sputtered, losing ground, was Rajasthan. Although it was the ruling party, it lost three of the four assembly seats—two to the Congress(I) and one to a rebel BJP candidate. And it barely squeaked through the fourth with a wafer-thin margin of 206 votes. The other surprise loss was the Gaya Lok Sabha seat in Bihar where L.K. Advani had campaigned furiously.

It was a mixed bag of electoral fortunes that greeted the Janata Dal. On the one hand, Laloo Prasad Yadav maintained his stranglehold in Bihar where the party bagged all the three Lok Sabha seats—Barh, Madhepura and Gaya. On the other hand, the party won just four of the eight assembly seats it contested in Bihar—Jharia, Paliganj, Fatehpur and Kurhani.

As for Uttar Pradesh, it was virtually curtains for the party there. In fact, V.P. Singh suffered a personal setback in Amethi where he'd camped for 20 days before the elections. The party which had won 22 Lok Sabha seats and 91 Vidhan Sabha segments in the June elections, won just two assembly seats in these by-elections—Chhaprauli and Bhognipur.

With the Janata Dal almost finished and the BJP restricted largely to Uttar Pradesh, for the moment the Congress(I) is sitting pretty. Never mind the fact that it's still a minority government at the Centre.

—ZAFAR AGHA with bureau reports

ULFA

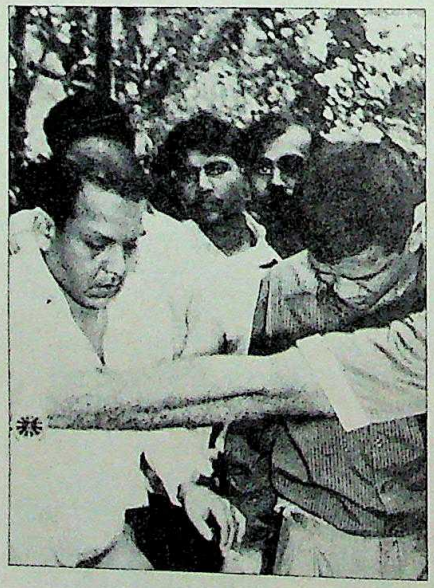
New Haven

Calcutta bases exposed

CALCUTTA is fast becoming a sanctuary for the outlawed ULFA. Away from the heat of the battle in Assam, the militants have established bases here for routing money abroad to buy arms. The disconcerting development was dramatically exposed by the arrest in the metropolis last fortnight of four top ULFA activists and collaborators: General Secretary Golap Barua, the self-styled 'foreign minister' Raj Barua, his wife Jolly, and a Delhi businessman Prabhat Saikia.

The Calcutta bases have been used by militants for confabulations, communication with their international connections, and laundering money extorted by ULFA into foreign currency. This was confessed by the four high-profile detainees after gruelling investigations, buttressed by the documents recovered from shipbuilder-marine engineer Raj Barua and Saikia, who had come down from Delhi to meet the Barua couple.

Raj Barua's diaries led to the discovery of ULFA accounts, loaded with money, stashed away in five city banks. They also contained names of ULFA activists living abroad and information on how funds were routed to Singapore and West Asia.



Jolly Barua (right); and Golap Barua after their arrest: startling revelations

More alarming, the police suspect Raj Barua and Jolly, who belonged to Calcutta's cocktail circuit, to be ULFA's diplomats. They were responsible for carrying out 'official deliberations' with the governments of neighbouring countries, including Bangladesh.

But the prize catch was Golap Barua, third in the ULFA hierarchy. He had flown in last fortnight from Delhi after making arrangements to convert several crores of rupees into US dollars. Apparently, he depended on Saikia for "international help". And Saikia's Vasant Kunj flat in south Delhi served as a base for currency laundering.

Though the stunning arrests from two guest-houses in the Park Circus area were described as the "biggest of their kind" in the state, a few nagging questions remained. The city police had information from the State Intelligence Bureau of Assam—which did all the groundwork—about 10 wanted ULFA activists holed up in Calcutta. Yet six militants gave them the slip. Also, curiously for a militant organisation like ULFA, no arms were found in the possession of the arrested.

"There is more to it than meets the eye," says an investigating officer. "The arrests came too easily. Did these activists actually give themselves away? Has there been a split in ULFA?" However, what is abundantly clear is that while the arrests are a severe setback to the closely-knit organisation, ULFA has spread its tentacles to West Bengal.

—SOUTIK BISWAS

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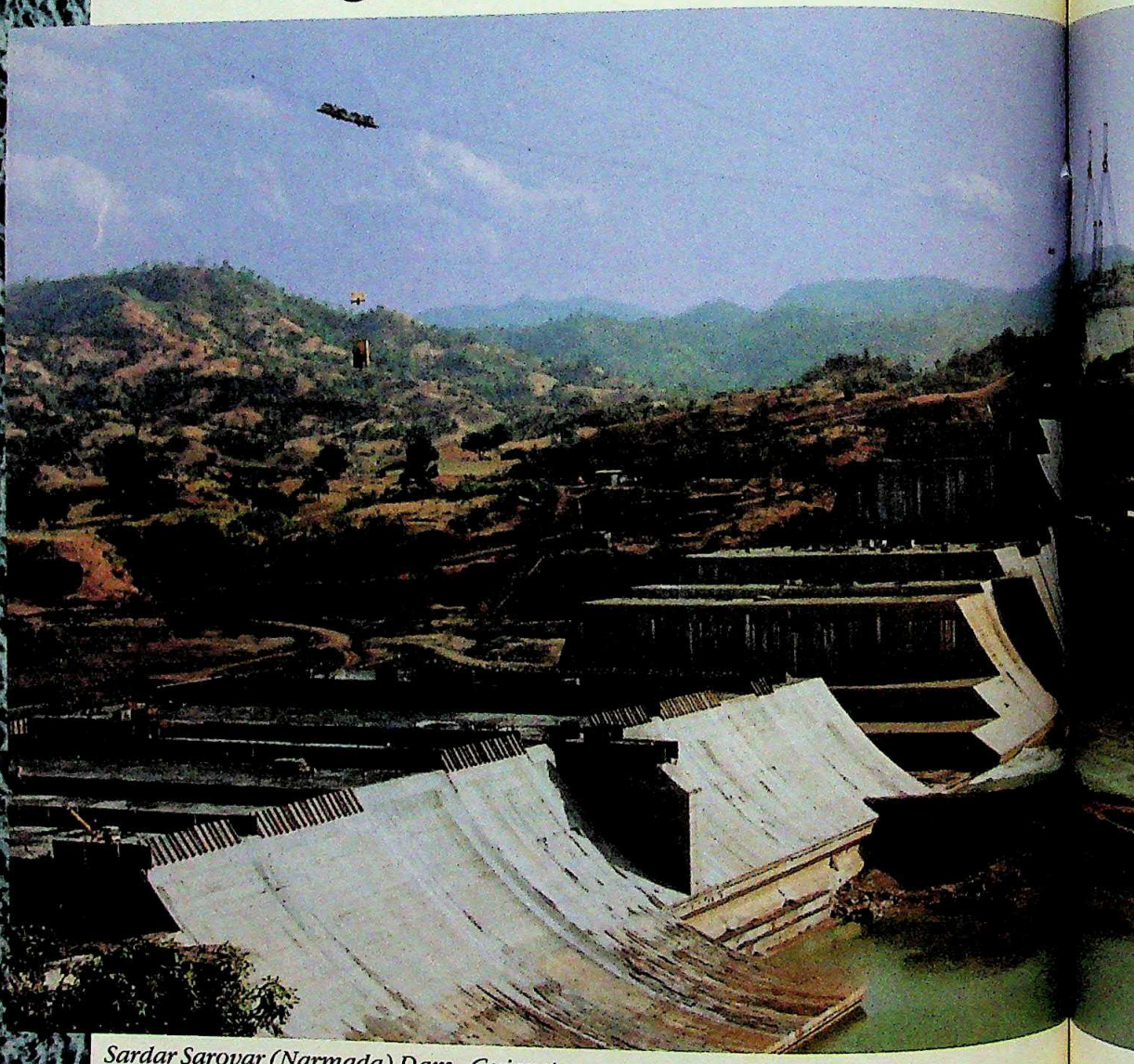

Sardar Sarovar (Narmada) Dam, Gujarat.

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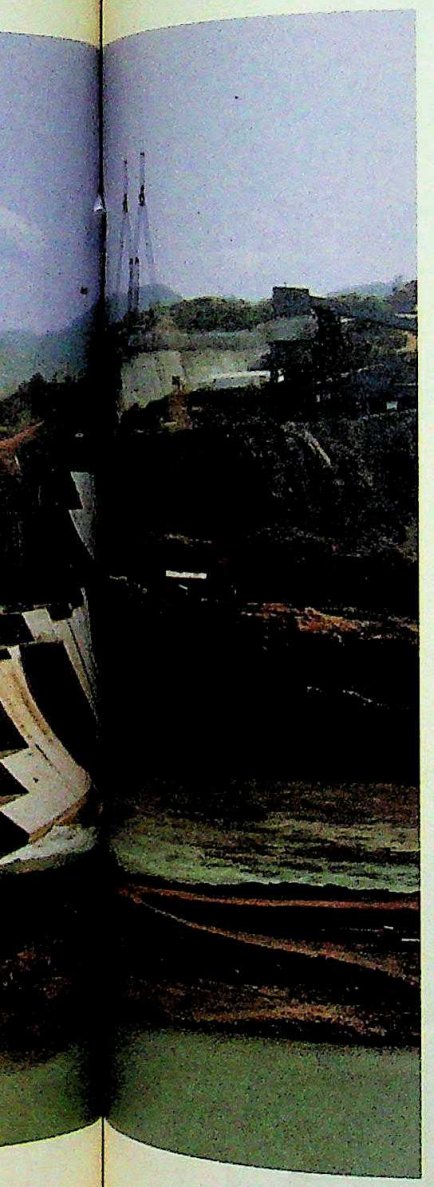

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CHIMANBHAI PATEL

Fishing for a Future

Arch-manipulator woos the Congress(I)

GUILE ought to be Chimanbhai Patel's middle name. For, against all odds the Gujarat chief minister thrives on. Last fortnight as his Congress(I)-backed Janata Dal(G) minority government completed one year, Chimanbhai, who in the recent past has successively abandoned V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar to appropriate the state unit of the Janata Dal, was busy working at a merger with the Congress(I).

What's emboldened him the most is the outcome of the latest favour he did to the Congress(I). Knowing that each parliamentary seat counts for the minority P.V. Narasimha Rao Government, Chimanbhai marshalled all his resources in the by-election in Kutch to ensure the Congress(I) nominee's victory. The gambit paid off. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao called him up to thank him for his help. Said an elated Chimanbhai: "The stage is ripe for the alignment of nationalist forces to counter the BJP."

The decks have certainly been cleared for a closer association between the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal(G). Two state ministers, Dinsha Patel and Shashikant Lakhani, who had earlier scoffed at the idea, suddenly gave their thumbs up to a coalition. Said Patel: "It would go a long way in cementing ties between the two parties."

And External Affairs Minister Madhavsinh Solanki, an old Chimanbhai foe, is only a shadow of the state strongman he once was. After his non-performance in a crucial ministry, his stock has plummeted. He now tells his loyalists that he won't be able to play a direct role in Gujarat. The truth is, Solanki isn't as politically nimble-footed as Chimanbhai.

The roly-poly leader also knows which side his bread is buttered. So it's Congressmen he has been cultivating. Swearing by him today are the PCC(I) chief Natwarlal Shah, legislative party leader C.D. Patel, youth wing chief Naresh Raval besides 24 of the 34 party MLAs. Says a beaming chief minister: "Our tuning is perfect." A tuning achieved, his detractors point out, by using money and power. It's a well-known fact that Chimanbhai is aware of the weaknesses of every Congress(I) leader.

Chimanbhai has also been exploiting his old links with Congress(I) heavyweights like Ghulam Nabi Azad, general-secretary in charge of Gujarat, Makhanlal Fotedar, Sitaram Kesari and Balram Jakhar. Through them he has convinced the high command of his political utility—after all he played the pivotal role in bringing down the V.P. Singh government.

Now, he is promising the Congress(I) strategists that he will wean away the Ajit Singh group from the Janata Dal into their party fold. Comments a senior Congress(I) leader: "If Chimanbhai can split the Janata Dal, then why should we worry about what happens to the party in Gujarat."

Chimanbhai has even wormed his way into Narasimha Rao's favour. What stood him in good stead was his organising capacity. When the prime minister came to Gandhinagar to unveil a statue of Mahatma Gandhi, the chief minister put up such an impressive show—2.2 lakh people turned out—that Narasimha Rao was flattered. Utilising the opportunity, Chimanbhai chanted a litany of his government's achievements. Narasimha Rao congratulated him.

Chimanbhai's dream of a merger with the Congress(I) is no longer so elusive. Narasimha Rao has said recently that "old Congressmen are welcome to come home". A remark pregnant with meaning. It could well imply that the prodigal is well on his way to returning to the fold.

—UDAY MAHURKAR

By exploiting his old links with the party, Chimanbhai has convinced the high command of his utility.

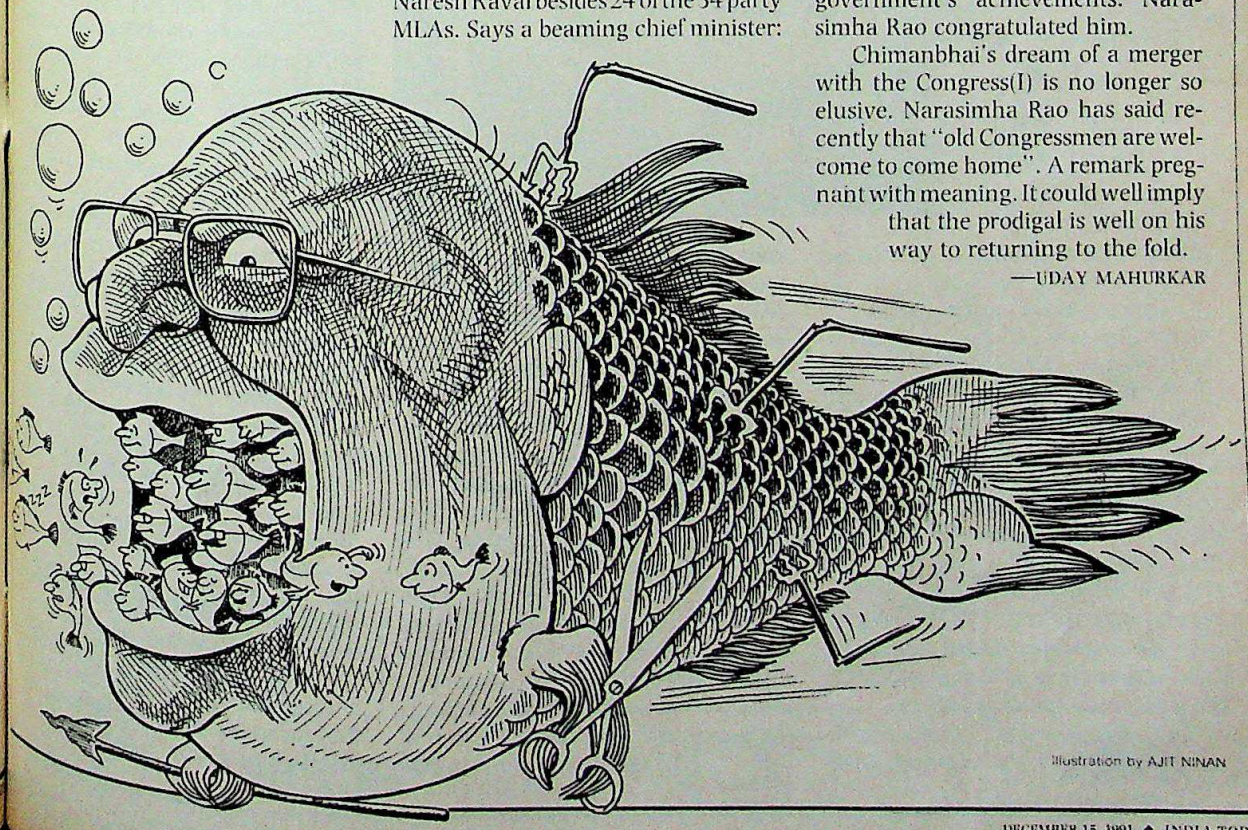

Illustration by AJIT NINAN

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EKTA YATRA

A New Trip

BJP discovers national unity

WHEN BJP President Murli Manohar Joshi rolls out from Kanyakumari in a DCM-Toyota van on December 11, he hopes the wheel will turn full circle on the Ayodhya issue. Because with its second yatra—called ekta yatra this time round—in less than two years, the BJP aims to establish its credentials as a party concerned about the unity and integrity of the country.

At one stroke, the party aims not only to usurp the Congress(I)'s permanent tenancy on national integration, but also provide gainful employment to those in the RSS *parivar* who are concentrating their muscle and lung-power on the temple construction. By travelling through 14 states and unfurling the tricolour at the yatra's last stop, Srinagar, on January 26, Joshi feels he will underline the "Centre's total inability to handle the problem of terrorism and secessionism".

The BJP's bid to emerge as the only viable alternative to the Congress(I) is well designed. December 11 is not only the birth anniversary of Tamil poet Subramanyam Bharati but also the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Then, by attracting media attention to the last leg of its journey between Delhi and Jammu, the BJP intends to precipitate a confrontation with the P.V. Narasimha Rao Government, which may be forced to arrest Joshi before he enters Srinagar. The BJP will then paint the Congress(I) as anti-national, or at the least, soft on secessionism.

Which is why over 50 senior leaders from all over the country were summoned to New Delhi last fortnight to chalk out the details of the 47-day drive. Says Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, who was also consulted about the yatra: "Kashmir is a vital issue and it is not proper to ignore it because of preoccupation with another issue. The nation needs the message of unity." His Madhya Pradesh counterpart, Sunderlal Patwa, echoes him: "The National Integration Council should seriously consider this issue of national importance." And BJP Vice-President Krishanlal Sharma hopes it will focus attention on Punjab and Kashmir.

Meanwhile, this time, the van, says A.S. Chadha, director of Azad Body Builders, Jaipur—where the vehicle was rebuilt—is not shaped like a chariot. "It has a unique design," says Chadha. The van has also been fitted with a public address system, searchlights and a special platform for making speeches. BJP national executive member Narendra Modi, who mobilised L.K. Advani's rath last year, is the convenor again. Shanti Dev, who worked on Advani's rath, also makes a reappearance. Other preparations are on in full swing, especially in the BJP strongholds of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

About two lakh volunteers are supposed to join Joshi when he reaches Srinagar, and in Madhya Pradesh, the party is enrolling members for a 'saffron brigade' to storm Kashmir. Atal Behari Vajpayee and Advani too are expected to join Joshi. Advani highlights the importance of the event, saying: "The issue at stake is national unity." And once the yatra is on course and the hysteria spreads, the BJP prays the temple will be a thing of the past.

—ZAFAR AGHA and N.K. SINGH

The party hopes to divert attention from the temple issue, while giving fraternal cadres something new to shout about.

BJP van in Jaipur: different model

GOPAL SUNGER

CPI(M) Subtle Shift

Kerela cadres want change

ONE of the world's last remaining bastions of communist orthodoxy appears to be savouring the forbidden fruit of change. And in the forefront of the call for reform are younger party cadres. In Kerala, they have defied the gerontocracy in the run-up to the state-level conference and the 14th Party Congress that starts on January 3 in Madras. Reluctantly, the party leadership too is letting go of some shibboleths.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Namboodiripad: dropping hints

But there will be no radical shift in policy. For this is something which neither the party bosses nor the cadres want. A vast majority of party members in Kerala wants orthodox communism to continue. So, when ailing General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad says that "the Madras meet will shape a new vision for a socialist society, based on experience from the world over", he is only hinting at subtle shifts, not over-reaching changes that will alter the course of the communist movement in India.

However, by the hidebound CPI(M) standards, even this is significant. The draft resolution for the meet released last fortnight recognised "the right to dissent within the socialist framework". Clearly a response to the collapse in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union. But while in West Bengal, with its history of purges, the clause was seen more as a symbolic recognition of the fall of communism, in Kerala, younger party cadres behave as if democratisation is at hand.

At local and district level conferences held recently, the cadres rapped the leadership even on local issues like interfering in the Nayanar govern-

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ment affairs and calling elections a year ahead of schedule. The tactical error of sending state secretary V.S. Achuthanandan, LDF convenor M.M. Lawrence and other senior leaders to contest assembly elections was not applauded either. And despite orders to the contrary, they discussed the Soviet Union in great detail.

More significantly, in these conferences, they also voted out the committees imposed from the top. In the Trivandrum city conference, senior apparatchiks like the president of the district council, K. Anirudhan, and CITU leader K.O. Habeeb were rejected. In Kollam, party district secretariat member M.C. Dhanapalan was defeated. This spells the end of 'democratic centralism', which the leadership seems to be ready to accept.

The dumping of CITU leaders across the board, together with the party headquarters at AKG Centre in Trivandrum gaining an upper hand in its tussle with CITU, signifies another shift—away from the labour base. CITU had scuttled some radical changes on the industrial front called by the then industries minister in the Nayanar government. Party intellectuals have also been unhappy with CITU's anti-environment stand on power projects.

Another basic principle, 'proletarian internationalism', is thus on the way out. Its dropping was suggested by a committee headed by N.E. Balaram, a known moderate. The panel had been set up to consider changes in the party constitution. An advocated shift of emphasis from the working class to 'working people' was a pointer to the desire for widening the support-base. As the draft suggests: "The party should mobilise labourers, farmers, employees, students, youth, women and all others of the working class."

About-turns cannot be expected since the old guard maintains that the Marxist-Leninist philosophy is alive; only its Soviet brand has died. Namboodiripad believes that Gorbachev is an American stooge. Yet, he says the Communist Party of Soviet Union will survive. And, of course, there is no question of disbanding the party in India. But the large-scale desertions in West Bengal in the past couple of years protesting the party's non-functioning and autocratic leadership are a clear warning. In Hooghly, 500 members turned in their party cards, while in Panihati 300 members quit.

The choice, it appears, is only between change and fatal suffocation.

—JACOB GEORGE

CAUVERY DISPUTE

Another Eddy

Court puts Centre in a bind

WHEN Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao referred the Cauvery water dispute to the Supreme Court, he probably thought that he had swum ashore. Not only had he avoided taking the side of the Congress(I) Government in Karnataka, but he had also warded off Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha's threat to withdraw support to his minority Government. But when the court last fortnight gave its 109-page opinion, it seemed to have thrown him back into an eddy.

But the man who is really in hot water now is Karnataka Chief Minister S. Bangarappa. The apex court has shot down his ordinance which overrode the interim order of the Cauvery Water Dispute Tribunal. The tribunal had directed the state to give 205 TMC ft of water annually to Tamil Nadu.

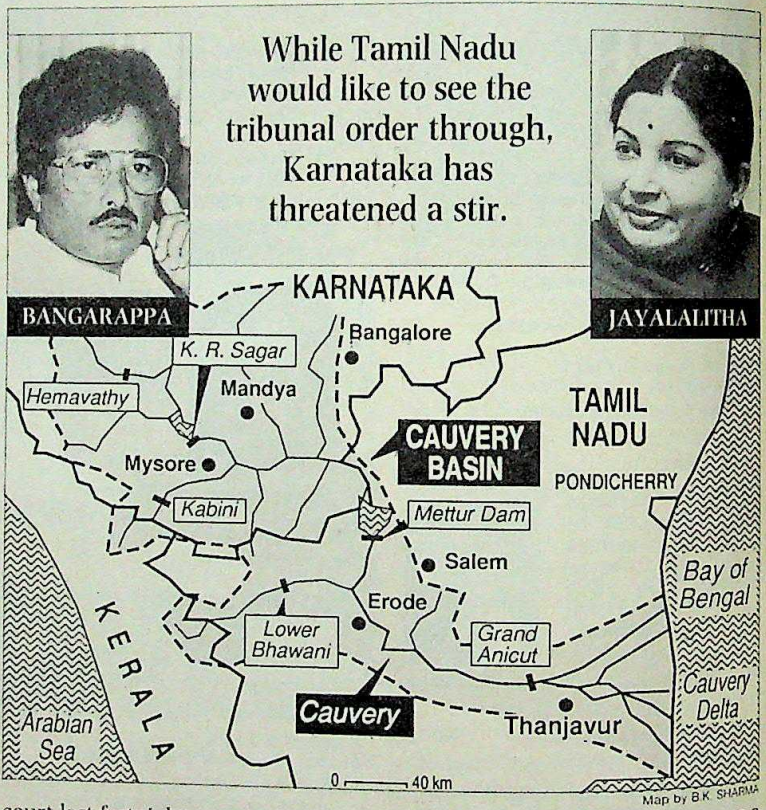
Calling the court opinion 'advisory' in nature, Bangarappa now hopes to contest the juridical status of the tribunal itself. And stall the water-sharing issue with the help of a Special Leave petition before the Supreme Court, and a review petition before the Cauvery tribunal.

Though Bangarappa's detractors are now asking for his removal, they too had revelled in 'checkmating' Tamil Nadu. But no Karnataka politician can afford to accept the order which will harm farming interests in the Cauvery basin. The restriction—to 11.2 acres—on irrigation will force winding up of major projects. And raise a public hue and cry. Bangarappa does foresee a law and order problem.

Predictably, Tamil Nadu politicians are pleased. The state is closer to seeing regular water flow to the Cauvery delta. Ironically, Jayalalitha, who termed court referral as an "eyewash", is now trumpeting the outcome as a vindication of her stand. DMK chief M. Karunanidhi too is taking credit for making the then prime minister V.P. Singh constitute a tribunal.

But the implementation of the order may well see Narasimha Rao getting caught in the crossfire. He will have to use all his political agility to persuade Karnataka to give in. Because not just the 11 AIADMK Lok Sabha members, even the 22 Karnataka Congress(I) MPs can threaten to desert him on an issue as slippery as water. His failure to effect an amicable settlement could bring a fresh flood of problems.

—GIRISH NIKAM



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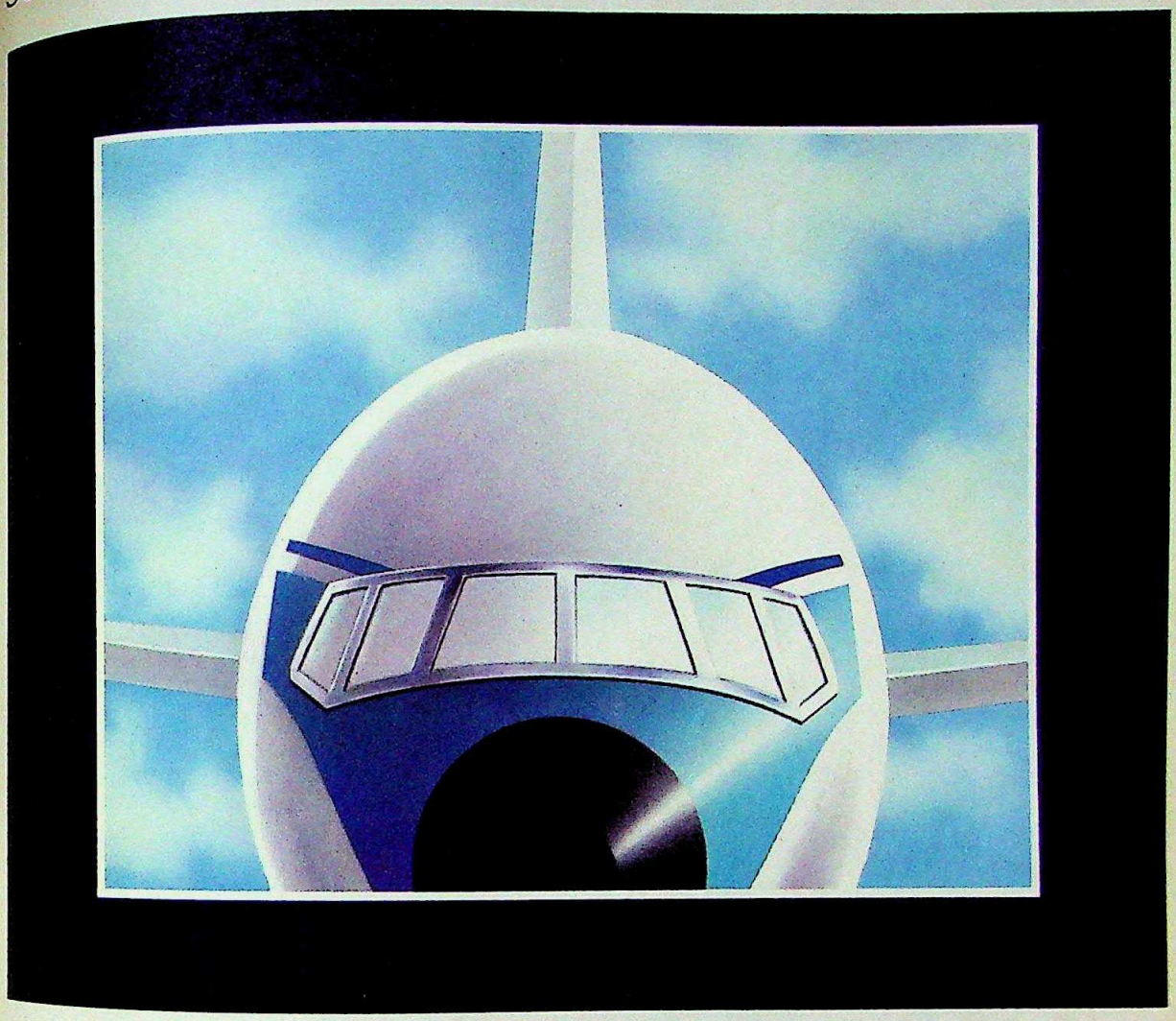

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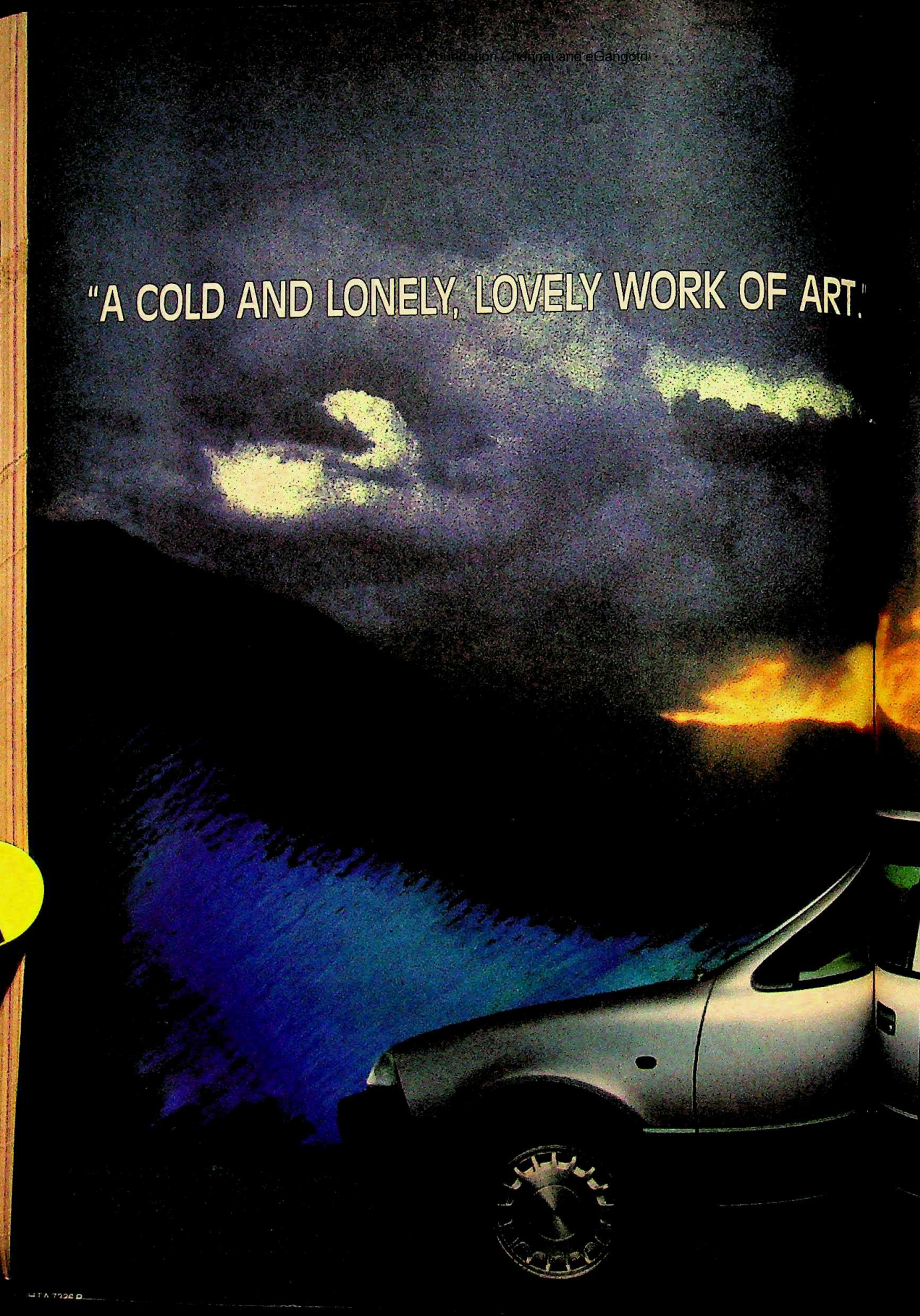

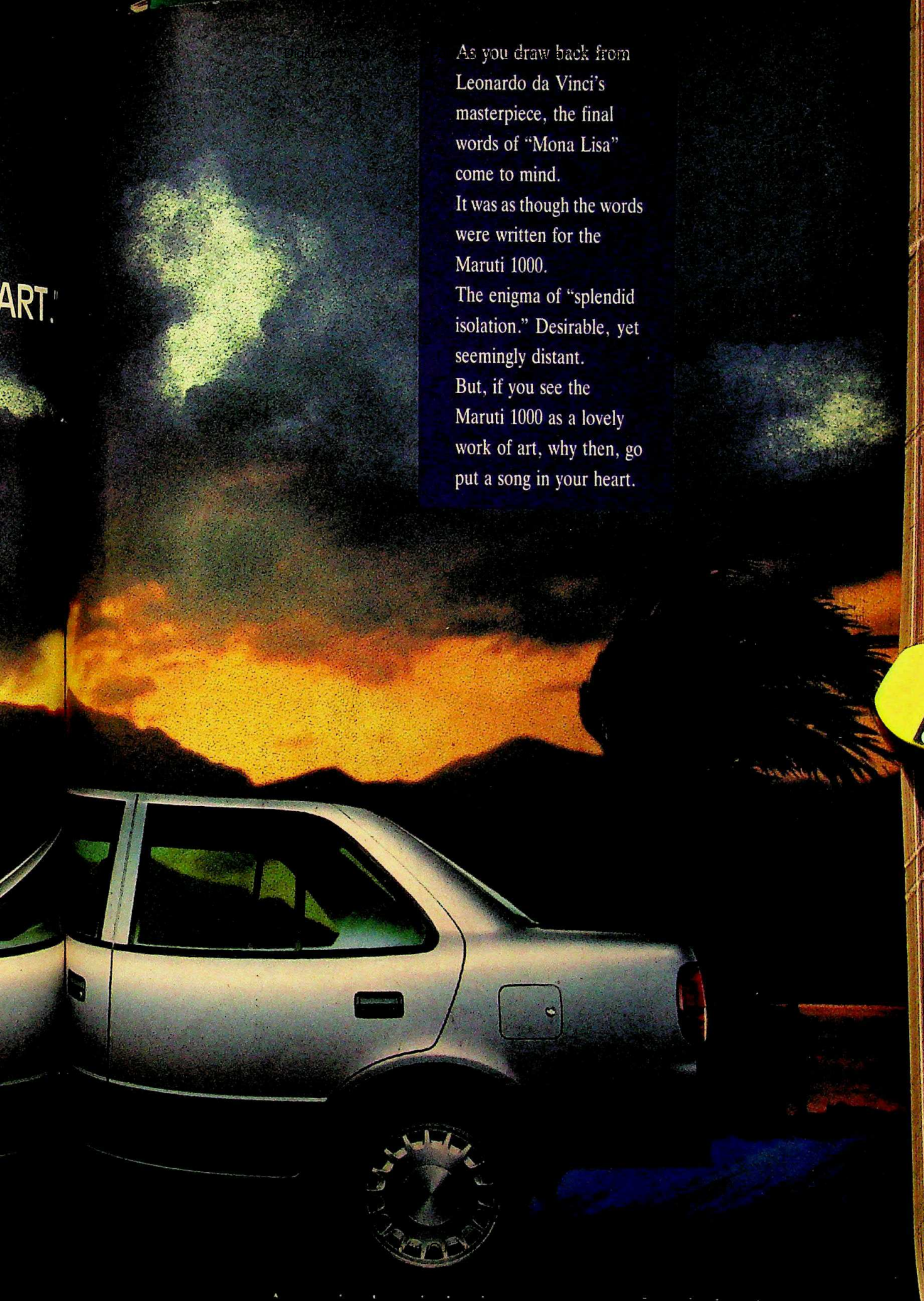

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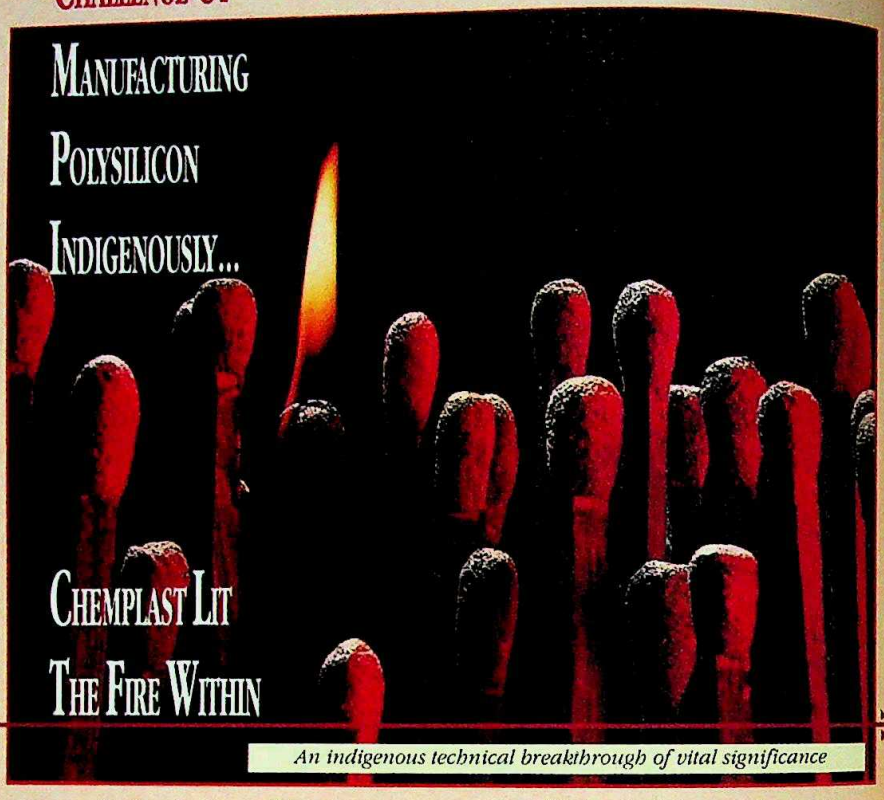

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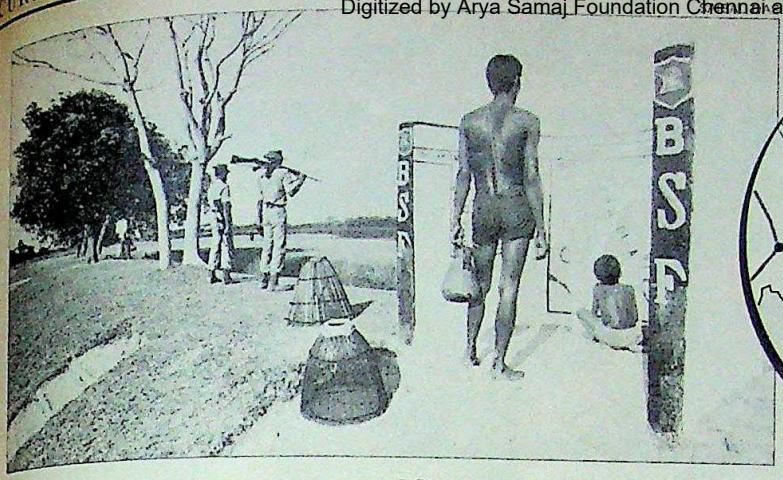
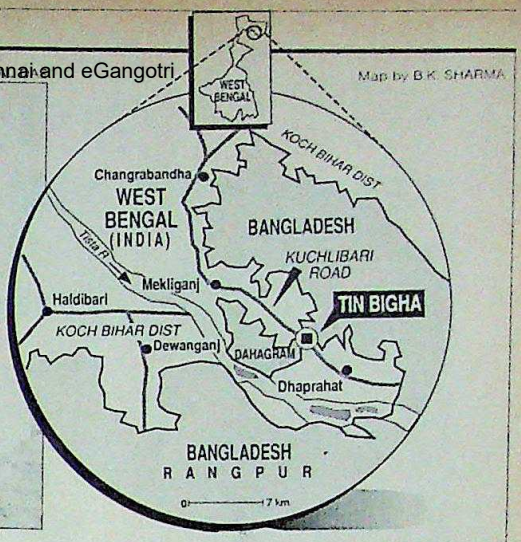


BSF post at Kuchlibari: inadequate



TIN BIGHA

Passage Pains

Transfer spells trouble

THE scale of the stir it has caused is out of all proportion to its size. For the over 60,000 residents of Kuchlibari in north Bengal, the Tin Bigha corridor, a mere 3.21-acre mound, is the one link to mainland Cooch Behar. And they fear that if the Indian Government leases the corridor to Bangladesh, this cluster of 22 villages on the border will lose its lifeline permanently.

When West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu visited the sleepy little town of Mekhliganj, 13 km away from Kuchlibari, last fortnight, he only deepened the gloom. He could do nothing to allay the fears of a population which is becoming more aggressive in its opposition to the transfer. Most of this bluster is thanks to the Tin Bigha Sangram Committee, led by the Left Front constituent Forward Bloc and the hardline Kuchlibari Sangram Committee (KSC), a motley group of disgruntled Congressmen and state BJP members.

But Basu only stood by the 1974 Indira Gandhi-Mujib-ur Rehman treaty, insisting that no political party could go against an international treaty. He maintained, however, that India would retain sovereignty over Tin Bigha. He also asserted he was against unregulated passage of Bangladeshi nationals.

Predictably, the sparks began to fly soon after the chief minister flew out of Mekhliganj. Former agriculture minister and Forward Bloc leader Kamal Guha, for instance, called Basu's promises "vague and unclear". The Vice-President of the KSC, Sunil Roy, was more belligerent and explicit: "We are not budging an inch from our stand against the transfer even if there is bloodshed."

But, for Bangladesh, the transfer makes sense. It will enable her to administer Dahagram and Angarpota, two enclaves on Indian territory. There are 95 such Bangladeshi enclaves in India, while there are 126 Indian ones in Bangladesh.

For the Kuchlibari residents, the bottomline is security. For the past two decades, they have been living on the thin edge of a sword. The nights are the worst, because it is then that cattle thieves from Bangladesh attack them. The 300-odd BSF men who guard the 36-km border have not been able to put a stop to the intrusions. The harassed villagers chorus in union: "We will perish if the corridor goes to Bangladesh. We'll defend Tin Bigha with even our blood."

However, if the controversy continues to hang fire, it seems like the villagers may very well have to learn to live with fear.

—SOUTIK BISWAS

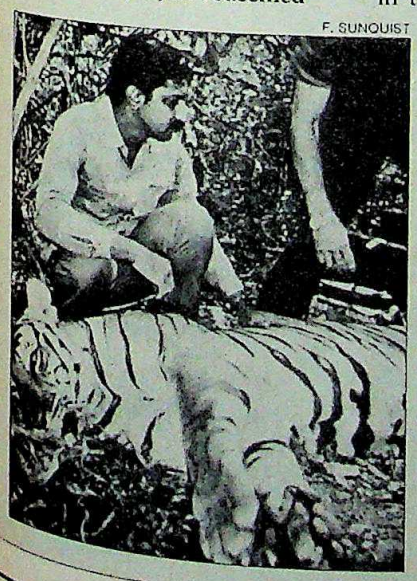
WILDLIFE

Right Track

WHEN it comes to wildlife issues, B. Basavalingappa, Karnataka's environment minister, can be as pugnacious as a charging bull. But last fortnight his enthusiastic efforts to stall the controversial tiger research project of K. Ullas Karanth came a cropper.

Karanth: project redeemed

F. SUNQUIST



Karanth's project, titled 'Ecology and Management of Large Carnivores', which aims at studying the carnivores' habits, and is funded by the Centre, the state Government and the US. It is based in the Nagarahole reserve where last year seven tigers and three leopards died. Basavalingappa, forest minister then, suspected the project methodology in which the tigers are drugged and radio-collared to track them.

The project was banned but on Karanth's plea, the high court in January, let it continue. The minister then set up an expert panel which has found the Nagarahole deaths cannot be attributed to the project. This, Karanth hopes, will remove the Government's "irrational fears". Basavalingappa, for now, is quietly retracing his tracks.

—SARITHA RAI

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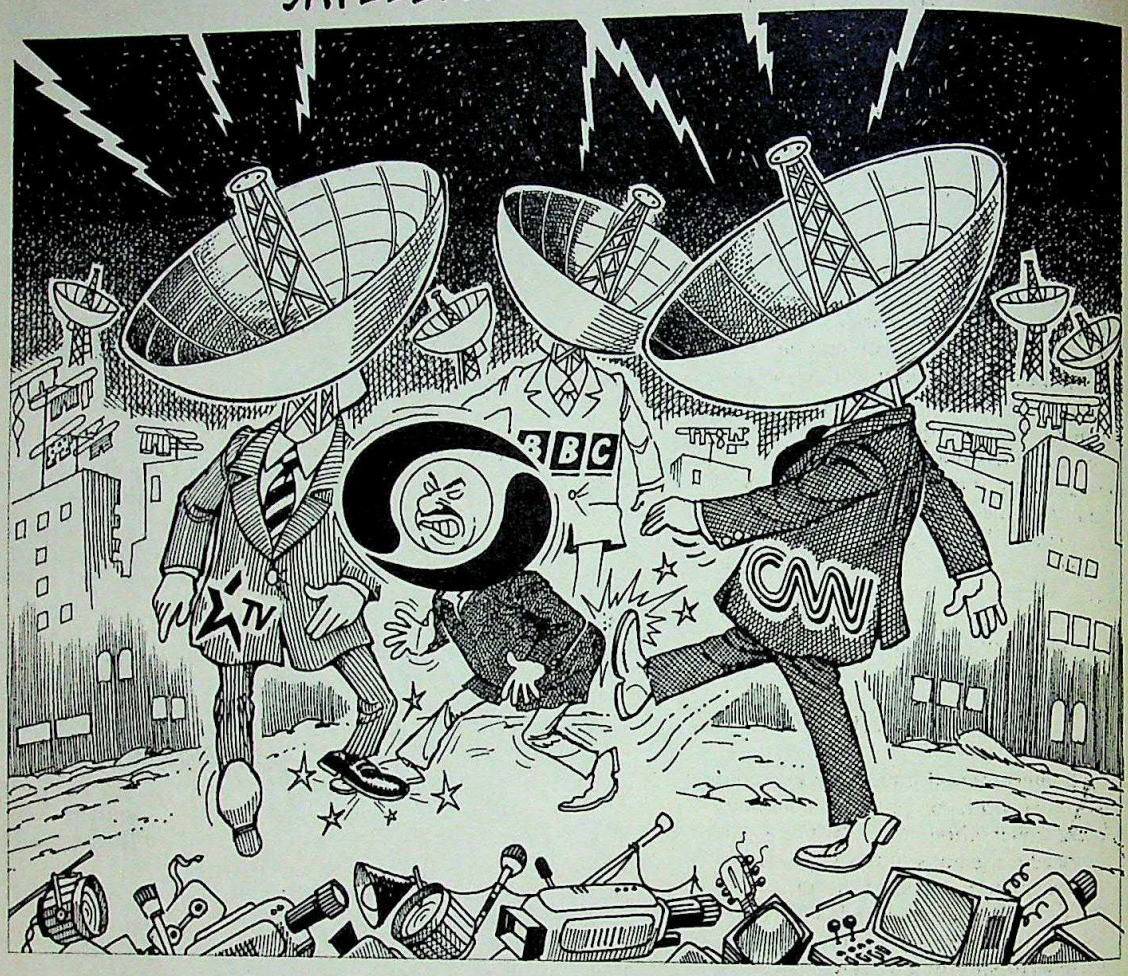
'SATELLITE MEVA JAYATE!'



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ENTERED: Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in the Guinness Book of World Records for his victory margin of 5,80,297 votes from the Nandyal Lok Sabha seat. He replaced Ram Vilas Paswan, who held the record by winning in Hajipur, Bihar, with a margin of 5,04,488 votes in the 1989 poll.

DROPPED: By the Government, the proposal to debar secessionists from contesting the elections in Punjab, in February. The proposal was dropped following legal advice—the Constitution cannot permit such discrimination between the candidates in Punjab and the rest of the country.

RESIGNED: Deepak Nayyar from the post of chief economic advisor to the Finance Ministry. He was appointed by the V.P. Singh government for a period of one year. A new post, that of chief economic consultant was approved by the Cabinet and Ashok Desai will be the first to hold the post.

APPOINTED: Kamal Narain Singh, 64, as the new Chief Justice of India. He assumes charge on November 24, taking over from Ranganath Mishra. However, he will hold the post for just 18 days—thus entering the record books—since he is due to retire on December 12, according to official sources.

AWARDED: To Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding, 1990. The jury, headed by Vice-President Shankar Dayal Sharma described Kohl as "one of the outstanding statesmen of post-War Germany, with a political career spanning 44 years".

NOMINATED: The late Raj Kapoor's dream project, **Henna**, as India's official entry for the Oscar Award in its foreign language films category. The film is directed by Randhir Kapoor and it stars Rishi Kapoor, Pakistani actress Zeba Bhakhtiar, Saeed Jaffrey and Ashwini Bhave.

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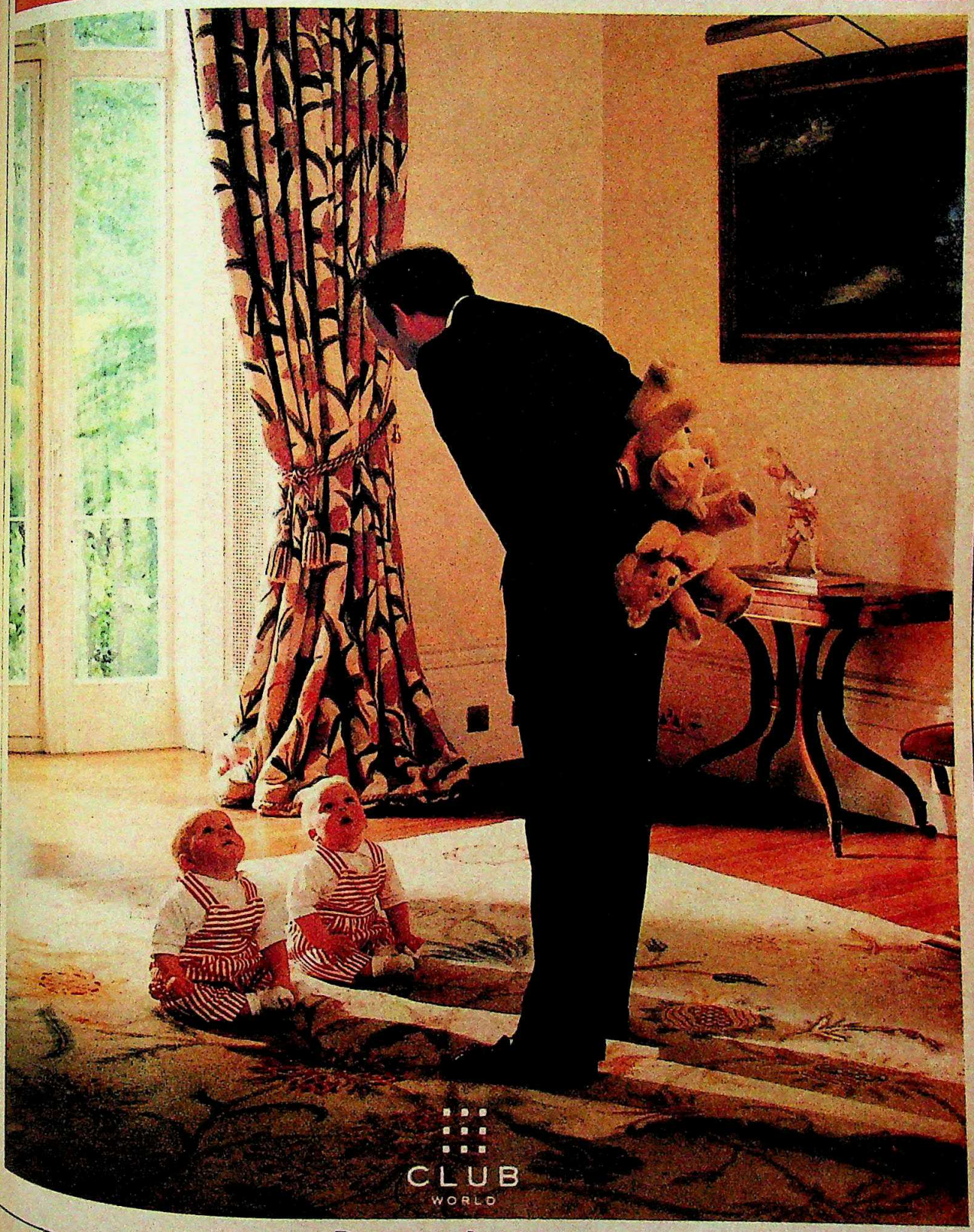

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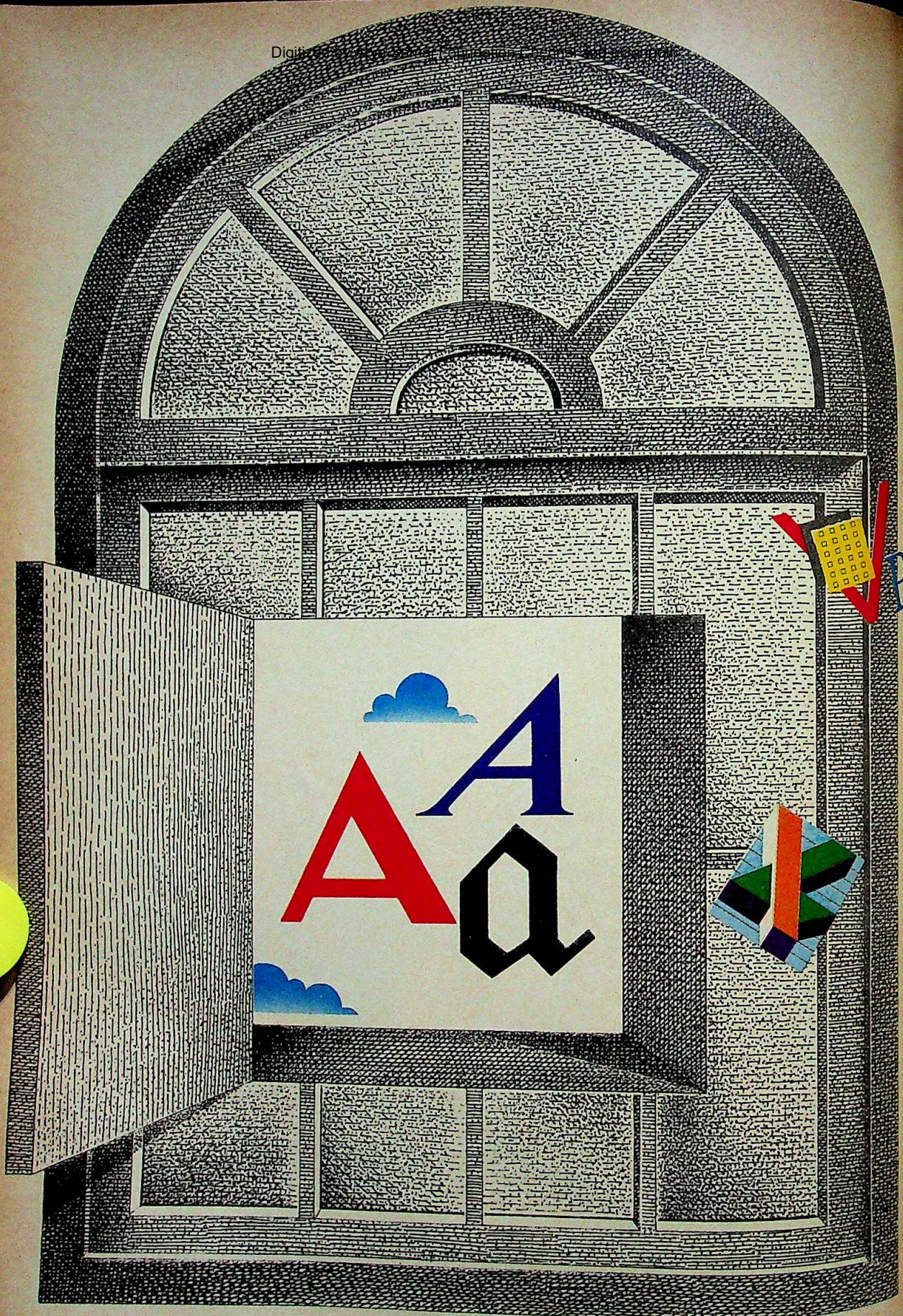

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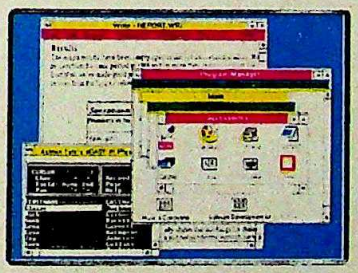

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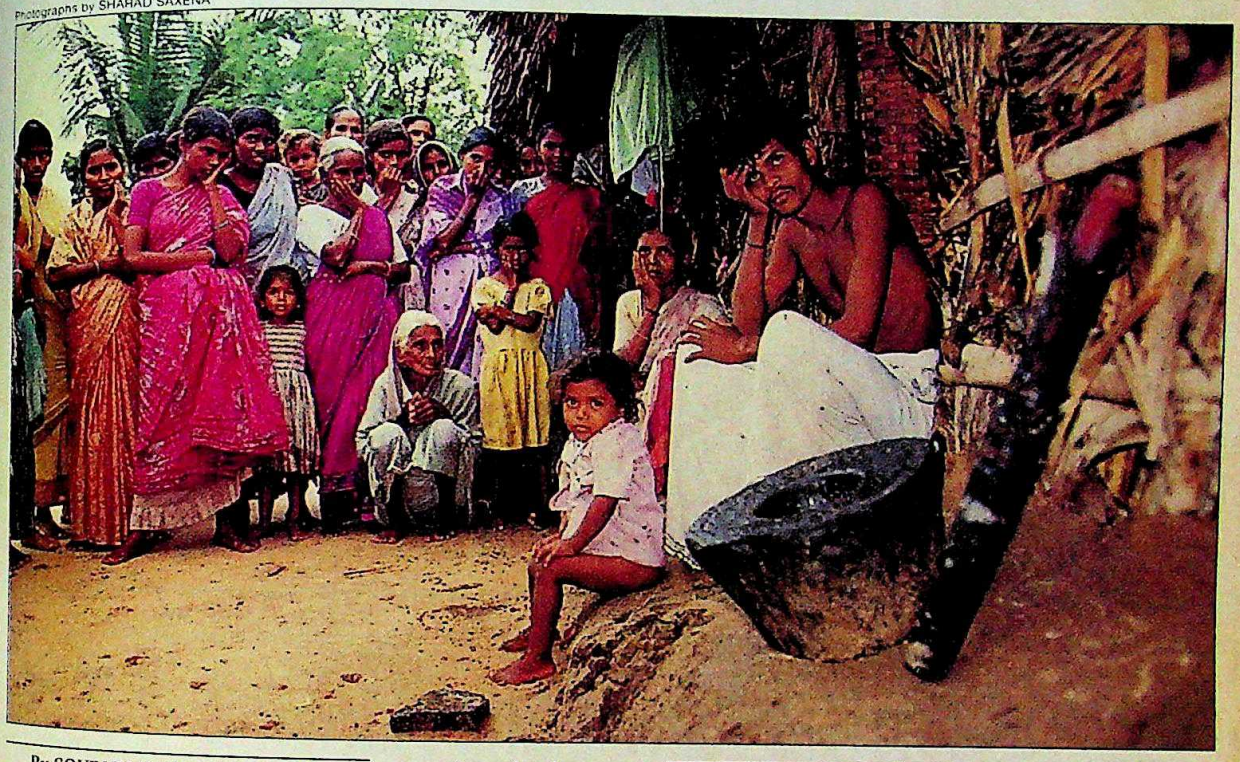
ANDHRA PRADESH

Harvest of Sorrow

The 30-lakh weavers of the state's famed handloom industry face starvation and death due to governmental neglect and policy shifts.

Photographs by SHARAD SAXENA



By SOURISH BHATTACHARYYA
in Chirala and Tenali

FOR Thumma Rataiah, there's no light at the end of the tunnel. It's been over two months since his 24-year-old wife Radha was reduced to a disputed statistic. Like 60 other victims of an unprecedented economic crisis tearing apart the fragile fabric of the state's famed handloom industry, Radha died of starvation recently. But the Government insists "ill-health" snuffed out her life.

Rataiah, 30, a yarn polisher at Eurupalem village in the Chirala mandal of Prakasam district, hasn't had a job—or a full meal—for over three months. He eats only if the rice he begs from neighbours is enough for his two children and aged mother. And, as if fate weren't cruel enough, his son Potharaju, 4, has been written off by local doctors. The child's bloated belly, swollen jowl and lifeless eyes are a stark testimony to his agony. "Isn't the Government going to help?" his father wonders aloud.

But it is largely thanks to the Government's policy shifts that Rataiah and the state's 30 lakh weavers are living constantly in the shadow of starvation—the same weavers whose 16-hour daily grind at the loom produces the magic of Pochampalli and Gadwal, names that are dropped at kitty parties and Festivals of India. The first blow was delivered on March 12 by the state Social Welfare Department's government order (GO) 168. It reversed a 1983 GO that had made it mandatory for state departments to purchase uniforms and office linen only from the handloom sector. The N. Janardhana Reddy Government's logic: state employees were complaining of poor quality of cloth.

Raghunath Rao,
Eurupalem weaver

APCO has not paid Rao for three months; recently his wife died of starvation in her ninth month of pregnancy.

The result was disastrous. Cloth worth Rs 22 crore piled up in godowns of the Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society (APCO) and the state Textile Development Corporation (APTEX). And about 10 lakh weavers dependent solely on these two organisations did not get paid for over four months. Says an emaciated Raghunath Rao, 28, a Eurupalem weaver whose wife Veerla Ankamma died of starvation in her ninth month of pregnancy: "APCO managers keep telling us, 'come tomorrow'. We've been hearing this for the past three months."

It took the Government over six months to wake up to the consequences of GO 168, that too after

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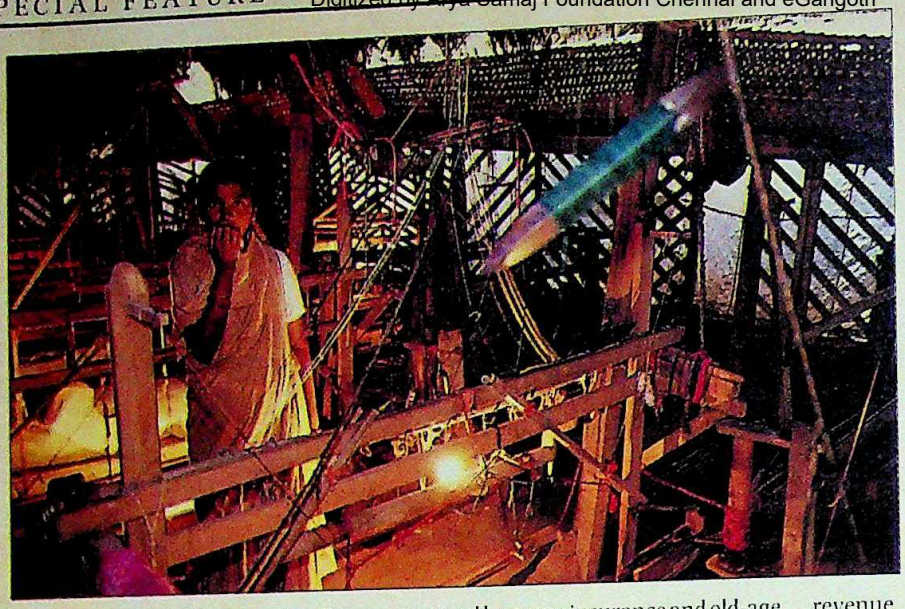

Venkateshwaramma, migrant weaver

Living on a 5-kg dole of bad quality rice, she does not complain for "rice with stones is better than none".

a protracted stir by the Handloom Weavers' Coordination Committee led by Telugu Desam state Secretary and former APCO chairman Rumandla Ramchandraiah. The chief minister announced on October 28 that the Government would release two-thirds of the Rs 22 crore it owed to weavers' cooperatives; that the controversial GO would be withdrawn; that weavers would be covered by group insurance and old-age pension schemes; and that consumption loans of Rs 1,000 each would be given at concessional rates of interest. However, a month and a half later, the weavers still wait for these promises to be translated into deeds.

Says D. Sai Babu, 27, a weaver of Bhattiprolu, a village in Guntur district where six starvation deaths have taken place in the past three months: "I haven't seen any money since August. We haven't even seen the ration cards the mandal revenue officer promised us." Comments S.N. Das, manager of the cooperative society that markets the world-famous Pochampalli silks, 35 km away from Hyderabad: "If this continues, the industry will collapse." This sense of utter helplessness drove four weavers to commit suicide. Like Katakkam Lakshminarayana, 33, of the Syndicate Bank Weavers' Colony, neighbouring

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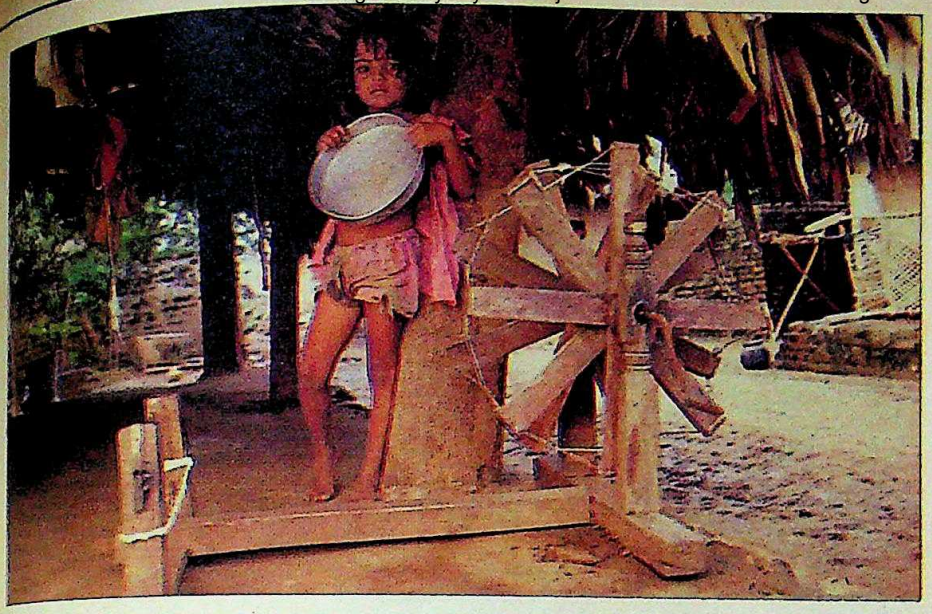

Priyalakshmi, a Bhatiprolu weaver's child

For families like Priyalakshmi's, the only chance of survival lies in eating less: a meal means a bowl of rice and little *sambhar*.

Chirala. After being jobless for over three months, Lakshminarayana made a thick rope of yarn and hanged himself beside his loom. Today, the loom lies idle. Because his wife, Dhanalakshmi, 26, who has had five abortions, is too weak to operate it.

The Union Budget was the last nail in the weavers' coffin. In its desperate bid to prune the overgrown deficit, the Centre removed the 25-per cent subsidy on hank yarn supplied by spinning mills to weavers cooperatives, and imposed a 7-per cent tax to boot. Moreover, it slashed the Janata cloth scheme by 25 per cent. Taking the cue, the state Government withdrew its subsidy on 40-count yarn and reduced its commitment to the Janata cloth scheme by 50 per cent. These decisions couldn't have been more ill-timed. June to December is the lean period for weavers whose fortunes are tied to the marriage season and to sunny days (rains bring work to a halt because damp yarn is unwieldy). The effects were felt soon after the July 24 budget.

Yarn prices ballooned while yarn exports caused acute shortages. The budget also pushed up prices of dyes. A kilo of brown dye, for instance, costs Rs 2,500, which is Rs 1,500 higher than the pre-budget level. "I've not seen such a hike in the 20 years I've been with

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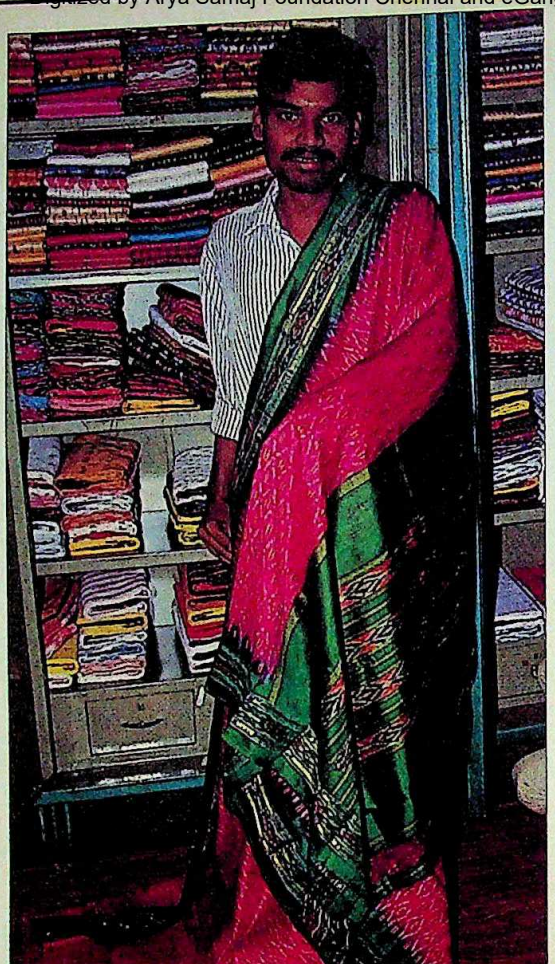
the Pochampalli cooperative," says Das.

Shishu Mandir, the local school, is already feeling the pinch. Pochampalli weavers are finding it tough to pay the fees that ranges from Rs 12 to Rs 35. Consequently, they have requested that payments be deferred. Says S. Satyanarayana, a teacher: "The mood has changed. Diwali was celebrated on a subdued note—few houses were lit up, none painted afresh and I doubt anyone bought new clothes."



MANY weavers are giving in. The trickle of families migrating to the powerlooms of Surat and Bhiwandi is growing daily. They have left behind locked houses, but neighbours wonder if they'll ever return.

The chances seem remote, specially since earnings are nosediving. At Eurupalem, the home of 30,000 weavers, a family of five earns about Rs 400 a month for 10 six-yard saris—after paying a 12.5 per cent commission to the master weaver. A year ago, it earned Rs 600 per month. There's less work, too, because master weavers are cutting corners by lowering production levels. Says Avvaru Balakrishna Murthy, a Eurupalem master weaver who has reduced his employees' workdays from 25 to 15: "I can provide work only if my stock is sold. But there's a limit to which the people can stretch the rupee."

The weavers' only chance of survival lies in eating less—a family in Eurupalem, Bhattiprolu, Mangalagiri, Chebrole and hundreds of such villages, spread over 12 districts across the state, survives on two meals of rice and a cup of *sambhar*.

Says Venkateshwaramma, 25, who came to Eurupalem from her native village in Krishna district: "The 5 kg of rice provided by the Government is full of stones, but it's better than nothing. We can't afford open-market rice that costs Rs 6.50." Adds Rajendra Prasad, former sarpanch and Congress(I) activist: "Isn't it strange that you get rice at Rs 6.50 a kilo in Delhi and we pay the same although we're surrounded by 20 rice mills?" What about the Rs 1.90 rice available at ration shops? "Try eating it," he suggests.

C. Ramalingam, Pochampalli weaver

With prices of both silk and cotton saris climbing relentlessly, sales have fallen by as much as 90 per cent.

Prasad, who has organised Eurupalem's weavers under the local Handloom Protection Committee, led a fast from October 17 to 21. The police broke the protest. But Prasad was determined and planned another on November 17. Cyclone-induced rains forced him to defer it.

In a reversal of roles, the Janardhana Reddy Government is taking the same line the Telugu Desam touted in 1988 when it drew Congress(I) flak for weavers' deaths in Prakasam and Guntur districts. No starvation deaths is its monotonous refrain. And the Telugu Desam, conveniently forgetting its role in 1988, is trying to gain maximum political mileage. Says Ramchandraiah: "The Government has no business to cut subsidies and allow yarn exports when the industry is being pushed into darkness."

The state Government's silence is defeaning. Senior ministers, however, admit privately that there's no point quibbling about whether the weavers died of starvation or ill-health. Says Health Minister K. Rosaiah, who represents Chirala, the worst-hit weaving centre: "The Government has taken short-term steps so far, but only a long-term measure like the reservation of 22 categories of cloth in the Constitution's Ninth Schedule will work. The chief minister has urged the Centre to implement the second option." Defending the price hikes, he says: "People should not mind paying a little more for handlooms. After all, subsidies also come out of their pockets."

Market reality is, however, far different. The price of an ordinary Pochampalli sari has risen from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,400. "As a result, sales are down this year," says C.H. Pankaj, an APCO marketing superintendent and general secretary of the employees' union. Says Murthy: "With the inflation rate being what it is, it's not surprising that people have little to spare for saris."

Neither, it seems, does the Government. Its lack of interest is apparent in the manner in which Textiles and Handlooms Minister Dharmana Prasada Rao goes about his business—his daily three-hour siesta during office hours is a must. And INDIA TODAY's repeated efforts to contact him during the day met with his staff's plaintive plea, "we can't disturb sir while he's sleeping". But for Rataiah and weavers like him, it's a night without end. ■

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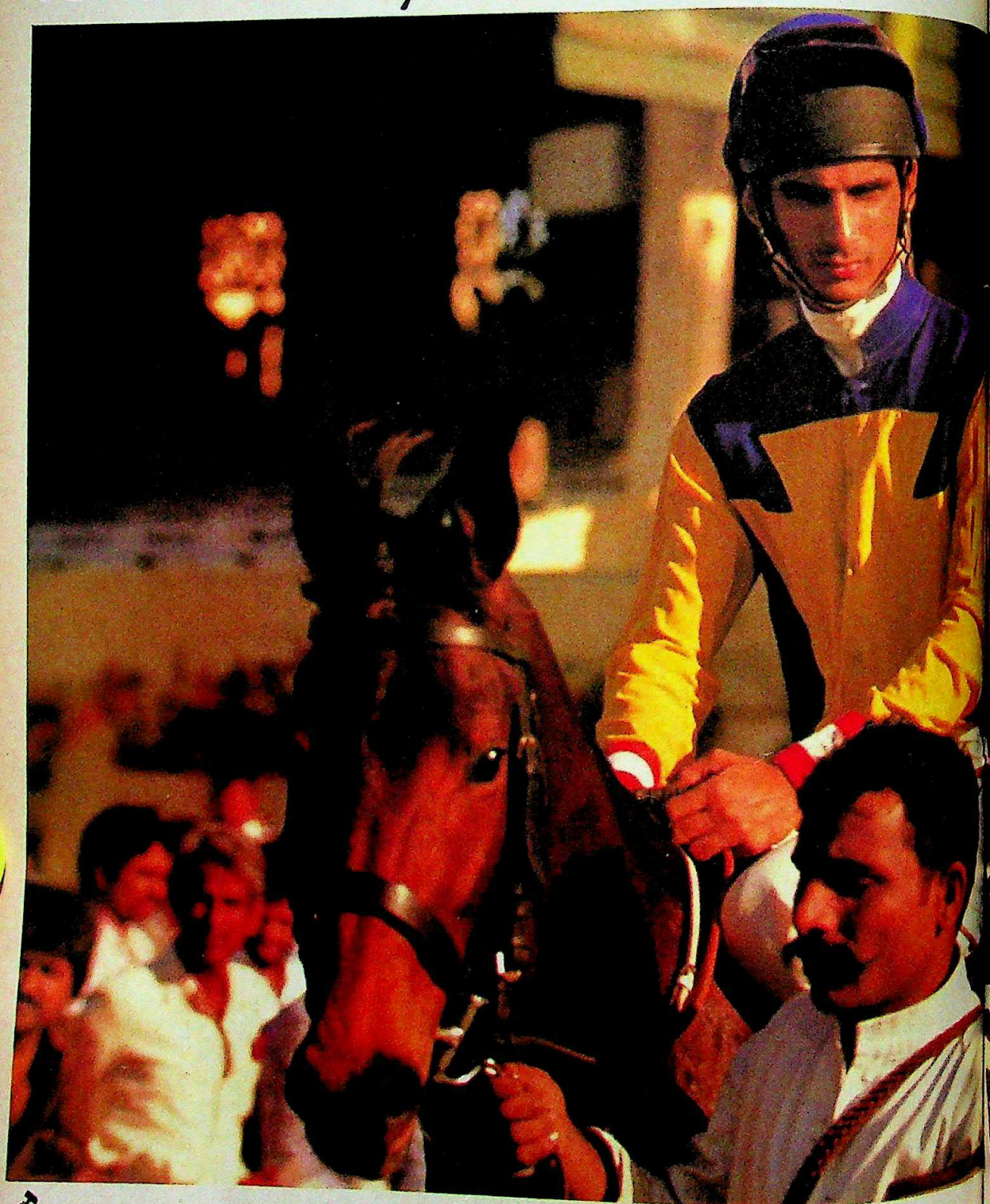

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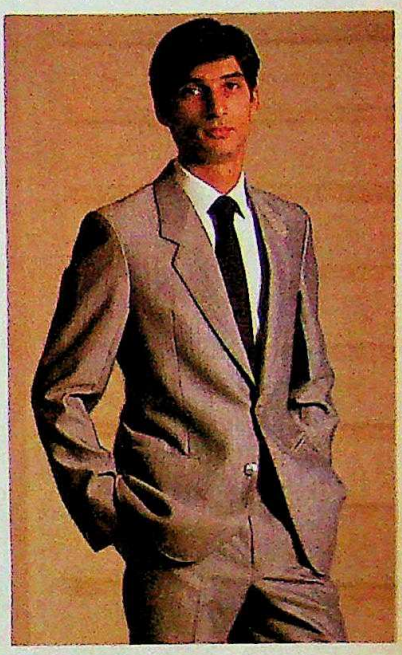

He has won the Indian Derby five times and the Indian Turf Invitation on four occasions, the 2000 Guineas thrice, the 1000 Guineas twice, winning most and placing in all the great Indian Classics.

When not showing the opposition a clean pair of heels Pesi may, on occasion, be seen showing off a more stylish length of leg in a light brown sparkle polyester, wool and silk suit tailored from that other winner, Raymond's "Silverene".

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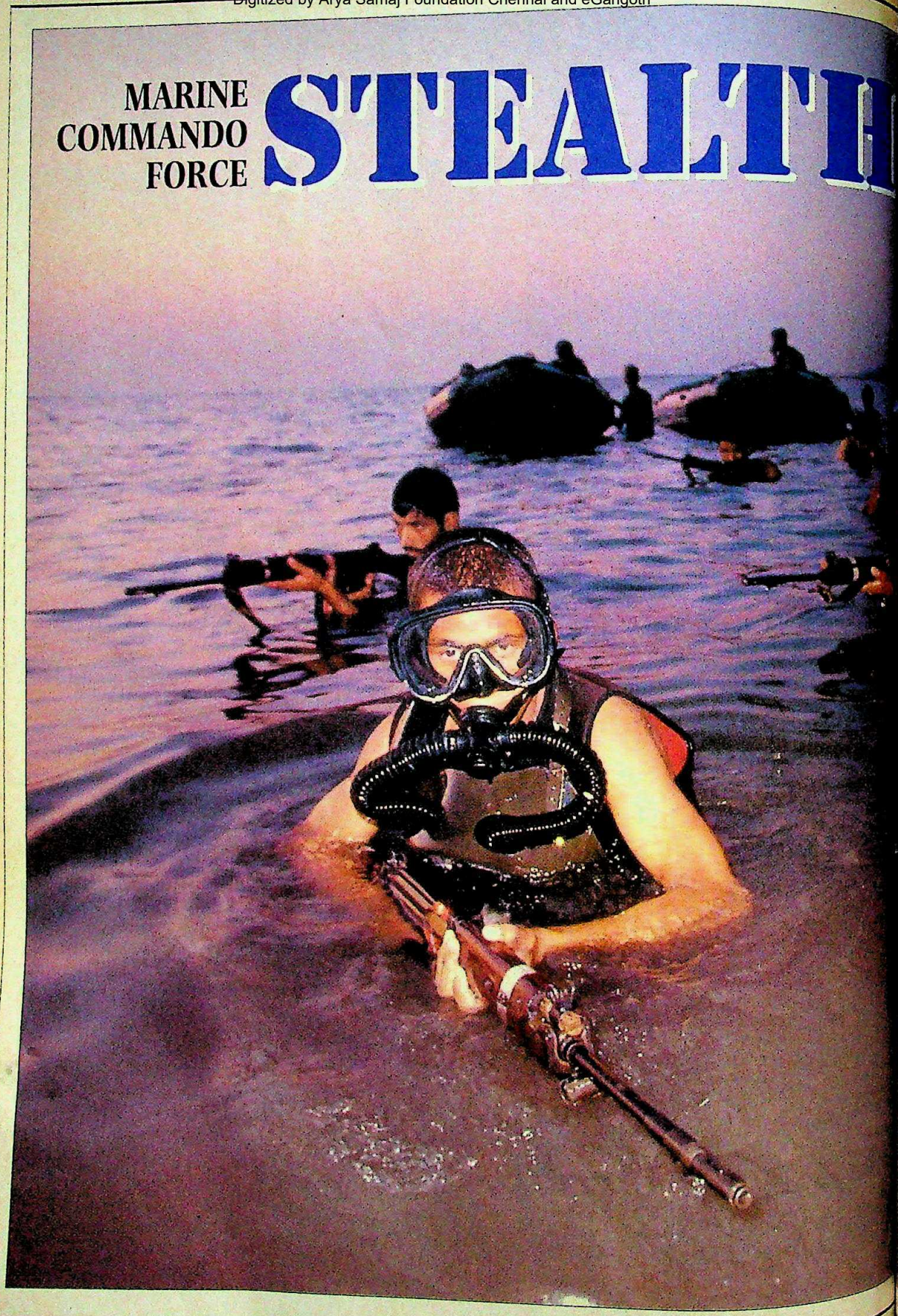

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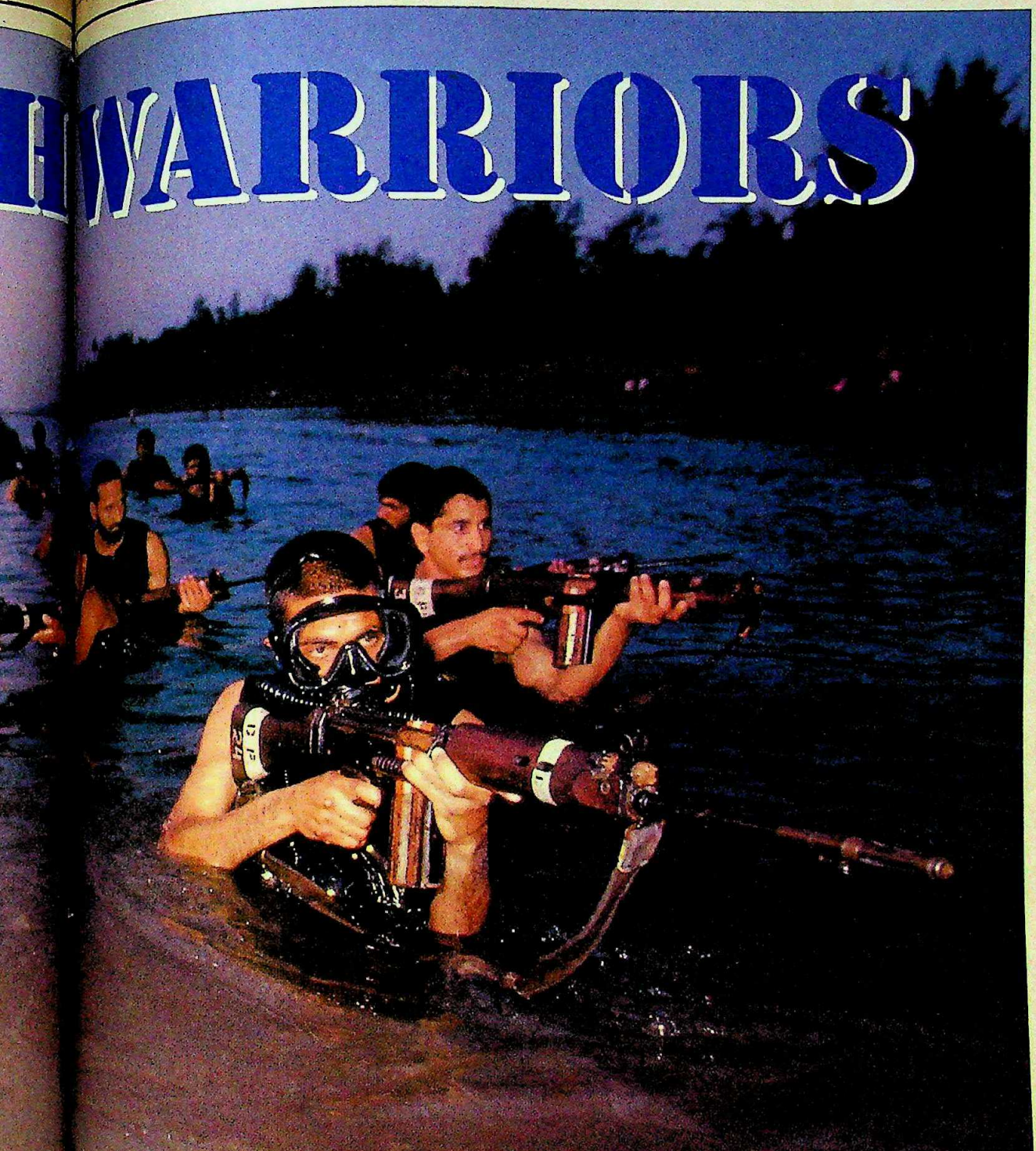
WARRIORS



They are the Indian Navy's secret warriors. An elite corps raised to conduct the most daring covert operations. For years they were kept under wraps. Senior Correspondent W.P.S. SIDHU and Senior Photographer PRASHANT PANJIAR are the first journalists to cover the Marine Commando Force. An exclusive report.

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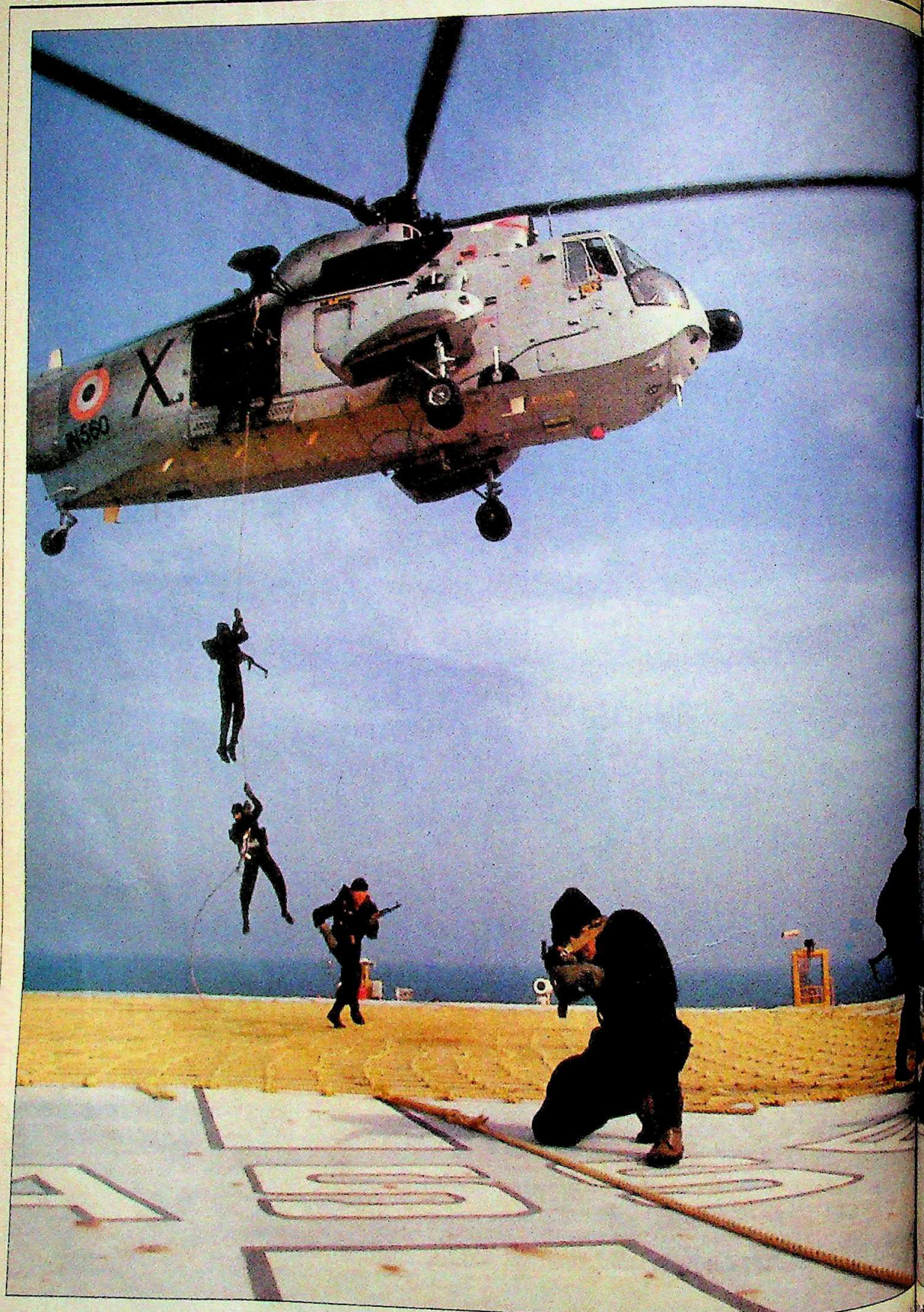

The Quick Reaction Section team storms a Bombay High platform "taken over by terrorists" (above) a diver ca

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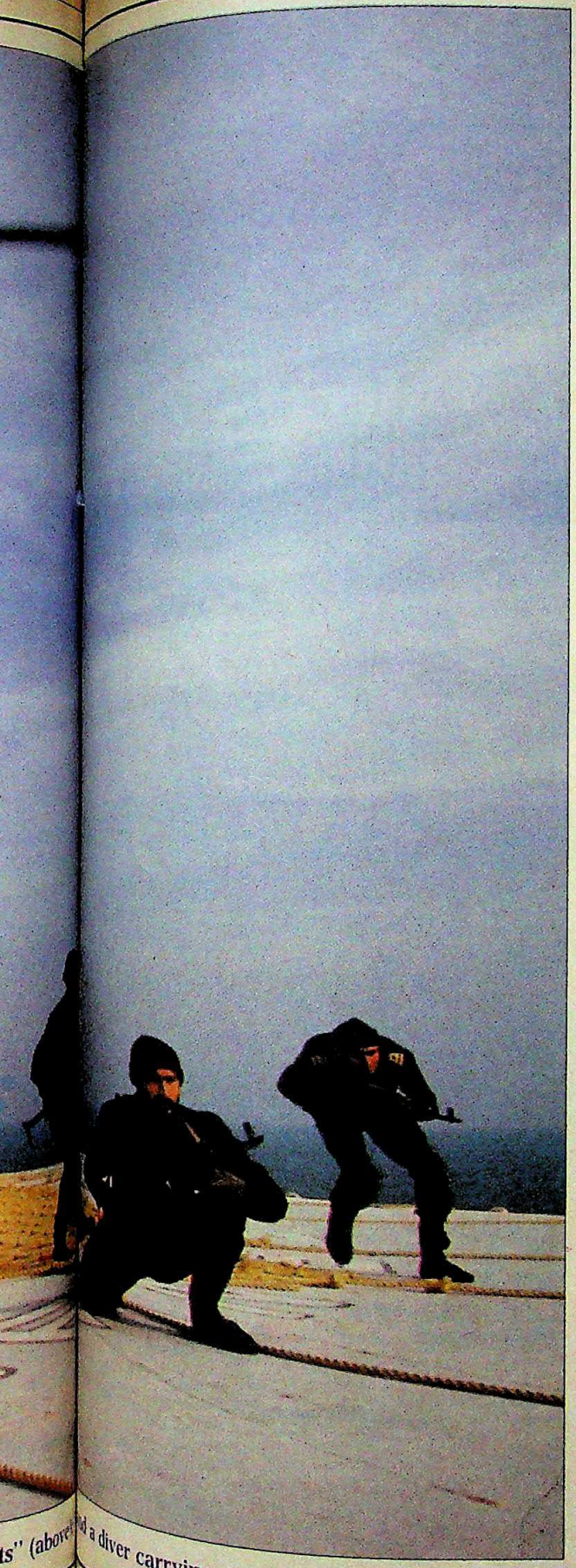
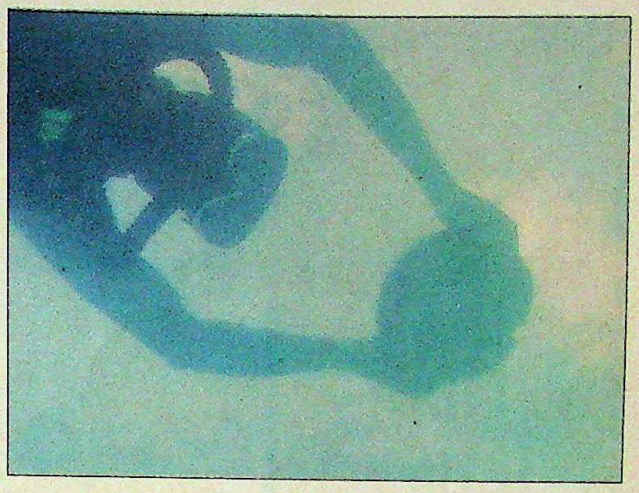


ts" (above) and a diver carrying an anti-ship limpet mine.



SCENE: An ONGC platform at Bombay High. Inside, 14 terrorists, who have taken over, hold the same number of hostages in six dimly-lit rooms. Within 30 minutes of receiving the news, two dozen men of the Indian Navy's elite Marine Commando Force (MCF), forming the Quick Reaction Section (QRS), swing into action. They fly out on board the steel-grey Sea King 42 commando version helicopter. In black overalls and balaclavas. Half of them are equipped with the Russian AK-47 assault rifles. Others carry the German Heckler and Koch MP-5 submachine gun—the standard close quarter battle (CQB) weapon used the world over.

Half an hour later, as the chopper hovers 25 feet above the platform, they slither down in seconds. Those wielding AK-47s take up defensive positions around the chopper. A small explosion signals the start of the operation to storm the complex.

00 SECONDS: Heavy boots kick open the main door. Armed with MP-5s, two commandos move back to back and peer around the main hall.

02 SECONDS: Adjusting to the poor light, they spot a terrorist hiding behind a hostage.

03 SECONDS: One of the men gently squeezes the trigger of his MP-5. Once. Twice. The bullets fly smack into the terrorist's head. Dead centre.

04 SECONDS: "Clear!" shouts one commando as the first pair takes up defensive positions. Another pair, similarly armed, now charges in. It runs through the 'sanitised' hall and enters another room to repeat the drill with deadly precision.

Just 22 seconds after the diversionary blast, the secret warriors breeze through the complex, 'neutralise' the enemy and regain control. The final count: 13 terrorists killed and one hostage injured.

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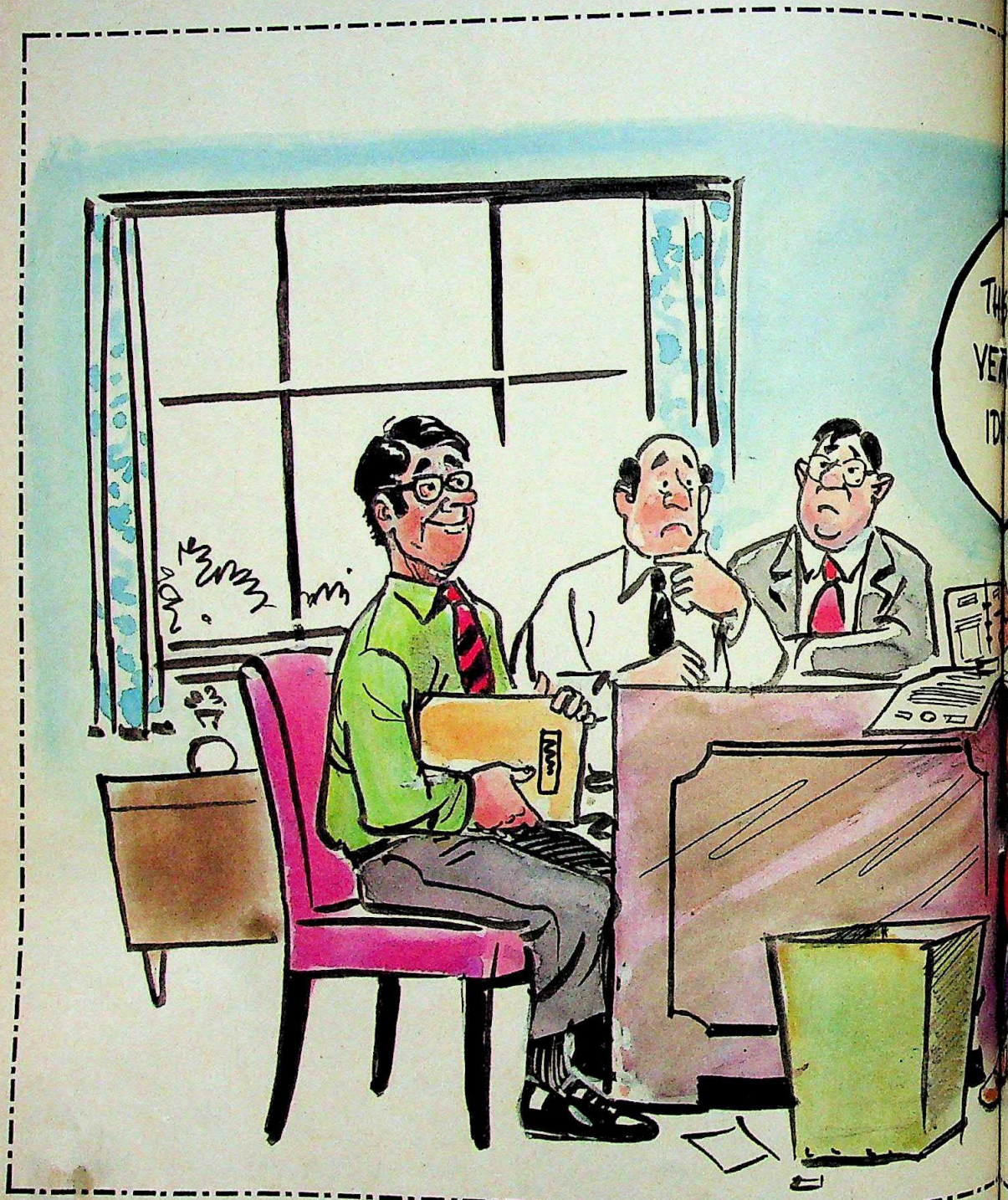
THE 'ACTING' MANAGING DIR



TATA STEEL

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GINDIRECTOR

Managers must act, we know.

But what of those who are always acting, those who say one thing while they mean another. You know the type.

They say 'yes' to ideas which they have no intentions of implementing ever.

Anything to keep the peace!

They make a show of encouraging new ideas, different points of view but do not have the inclination or the courage or the will to make a change for progress.

Too long has business been driven by the tyranny of the tried and tested, while Innovation sits patiently in a corner. It is a work ethic dictated from just one side of the table—the manager's.

We need to change all that; be open-minded. Give ideas a chance. Give dissent a chance. Encourage it, but with a sense of responsibility; with imagination; with honesty; with the confidence that things can be better, and with a will to implement the ideas born out of dissent.

We at Tata Steel are committed to this culture of creativity, dynamism and progress. We are committed to creative action.

DISSENT: THE VOICE OF PROGRESS

HTA 4412

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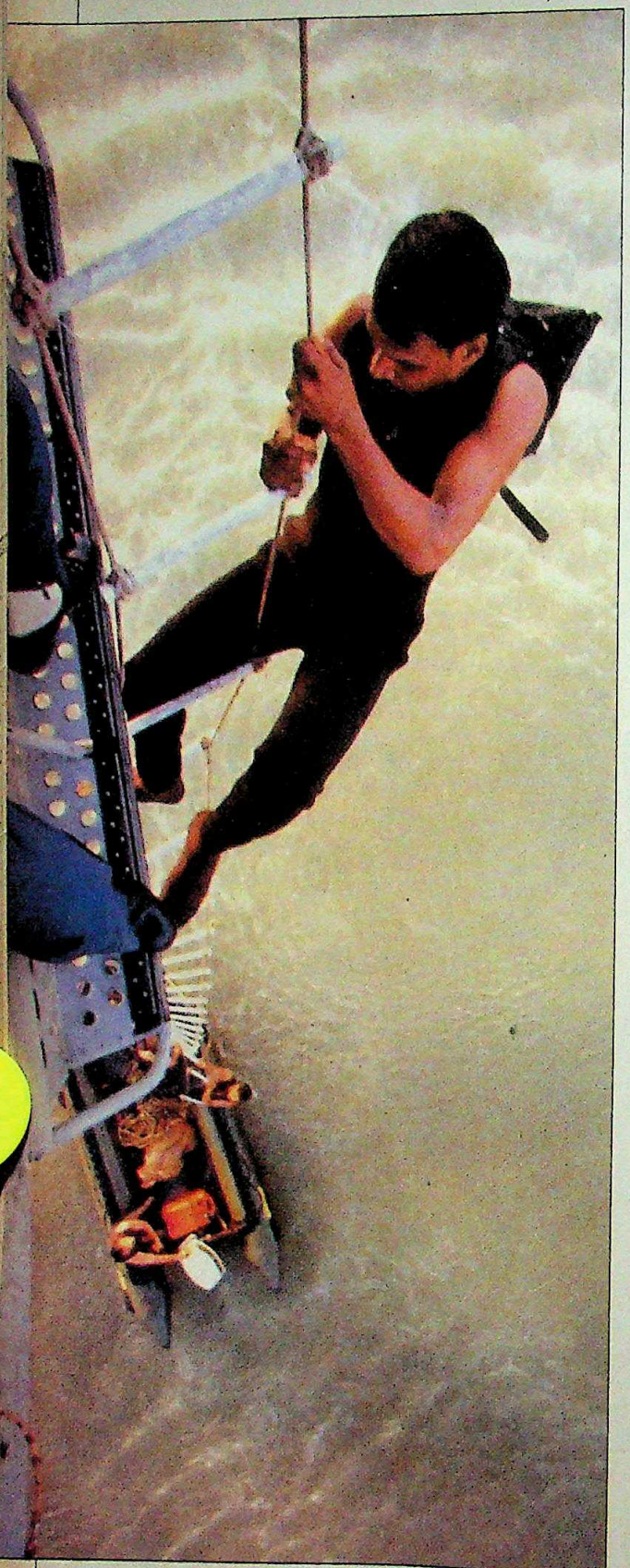


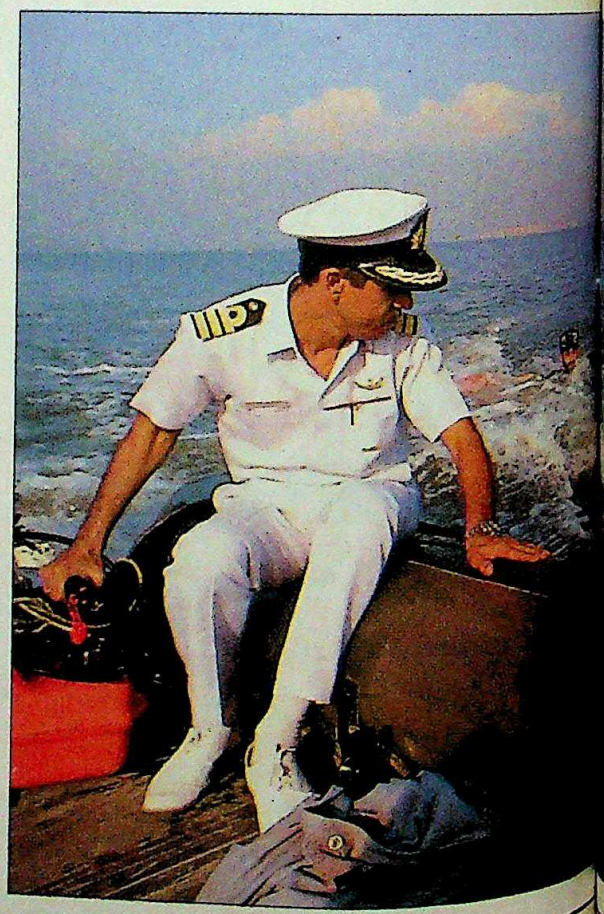
Commandos 'recovered' from a boat by helicopter.

This realistic scenario is one of many structured exercises that the navy's most covert unit undertakes to hone its skills for a variety of roles. The situation is make-believe, the 'terrorists' and 'hostages' are cardboard cut-outs and the enemy non-existent. But the bullets used are real. Says Commander S.R. Kulkarni, chief of *INS Abhimanyu*, home of the commandos: "We use real ammo even for training. There are no fakes."

THE Indian Navy, which had felt the need for a QRS to counter threats to the offshore installations and for covert operations during war, set up the Indian Marine Special Force (IMSF) in April 1986. Evolved on the lines of the US Navy Seals and the British Special Air Service as also the Special Boat Service, its members were to be qualified divers, commandos and paratroopers.

Consequently, the navy hand-picked clearance divers—who can dive up to 50 metres and who clear mines and explosives underwater. They also knew how to use the Chariot—a two-man

An officer observes a Chariot mini-sub and its



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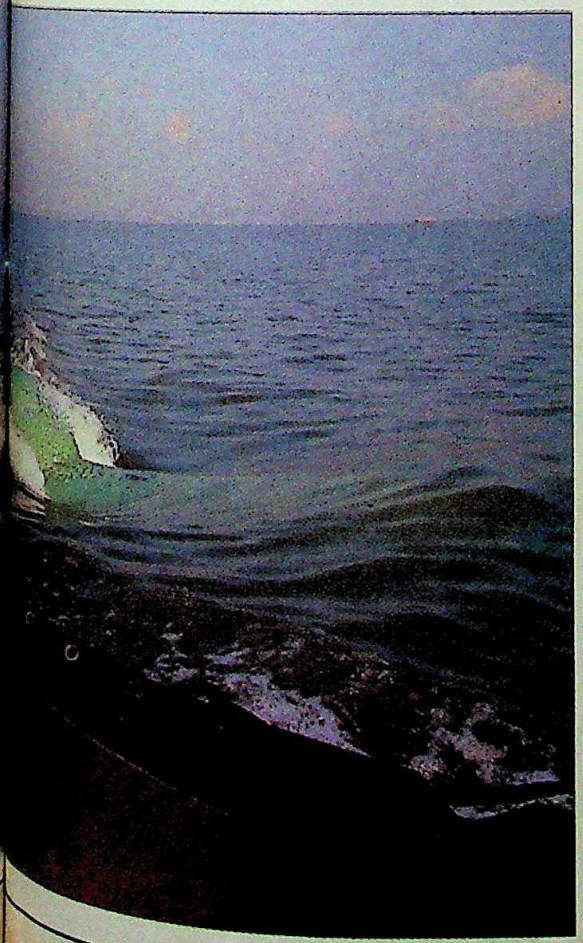
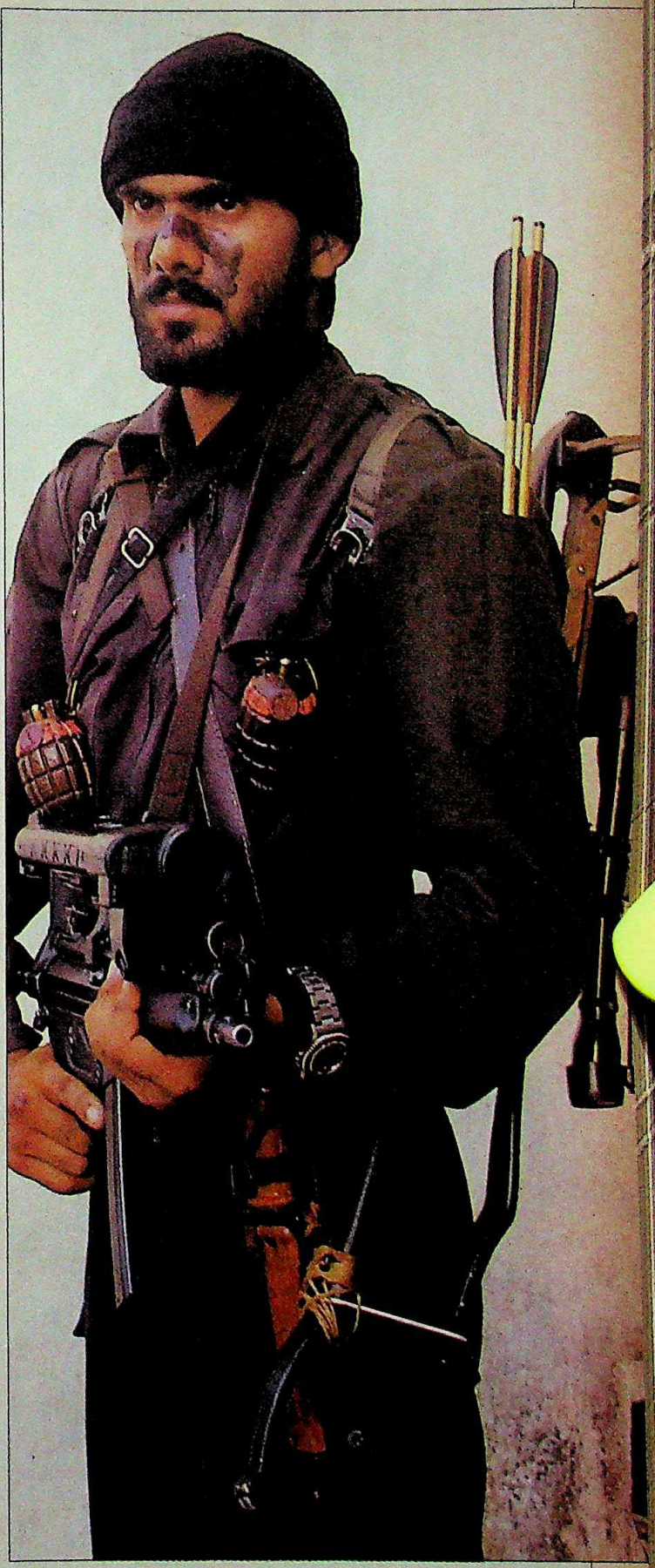
mini submarine—for clandestine operations like planting limpet mines on enemy ships. Initially, three of these officers were sent to the US Navy Seals school at Coronado, California. But now the selected few are trained in India itself in anti-terrorist tactics and paratrooping. And recently—soon after Admiral L. Ramdas took over as the navy chief—the IMSF was rechristened as the MCF. The MCF commandos' uniqueness is that they operate in the sea, the air and on land. They are proficient in the use of sea mines, CQB weapons, silent crossbows with poison darts or explosive-tipped arrows. Trained in unarmed combat, they can also kill with their bare hands.

The MCF's strength lies in the training, which is comparable with the rigorous, almost backbreaking, regimen of the US Seals. Even though there is no 'Hell's week' in which only four hours sleep is permitted in six days, the drop-out rate from any MCF course is as high as the Seals'—50 per cent.

The first month in the nine-month course is dedicated to physical fitness. The gruelling day

going off on a dare-devil clandestine mission.





A mission-ready commando in war paint.

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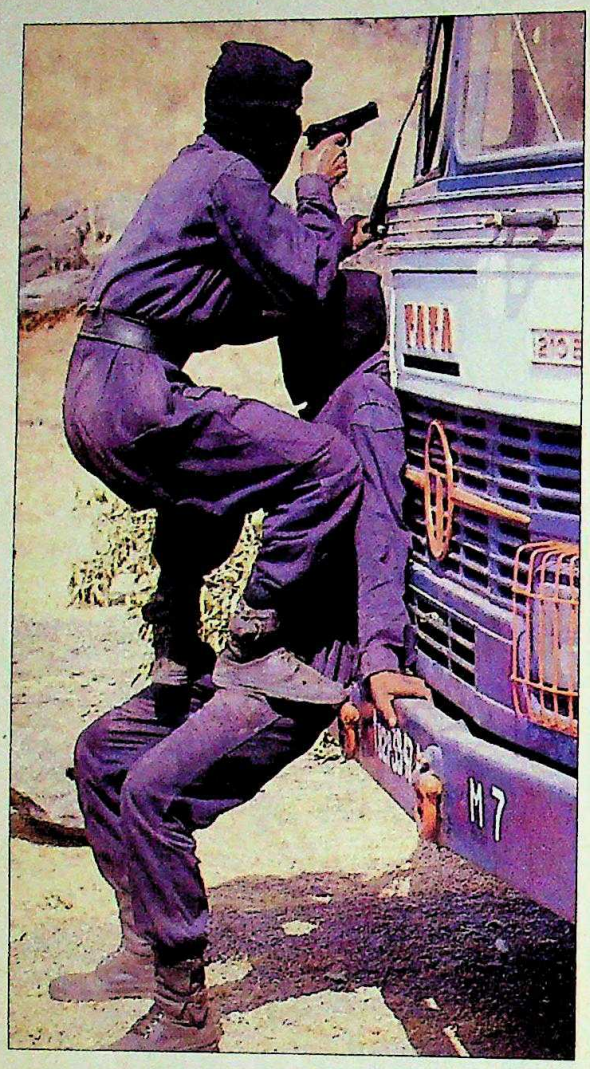

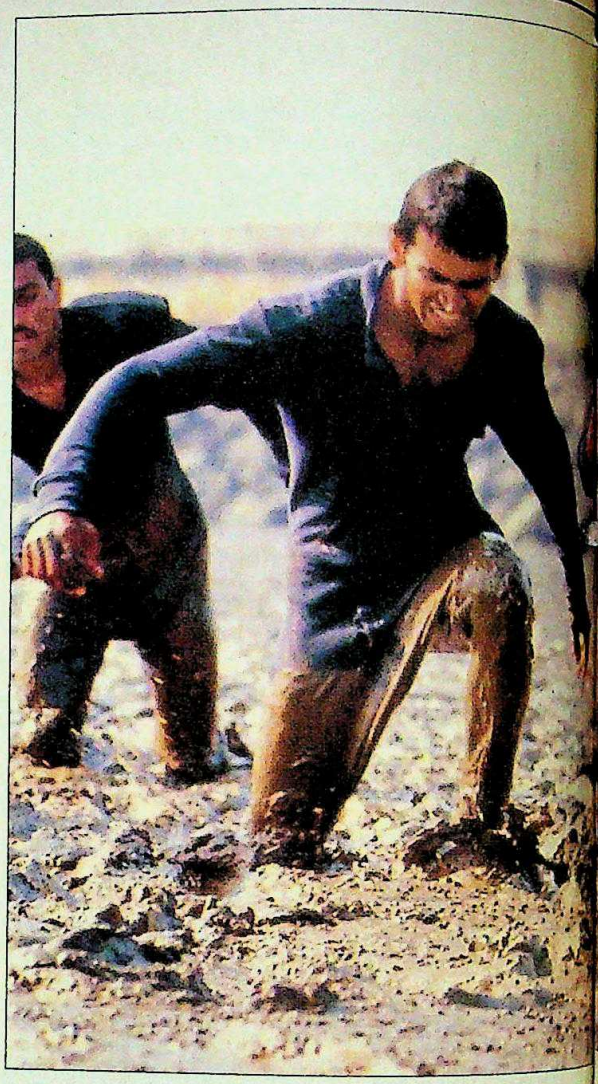

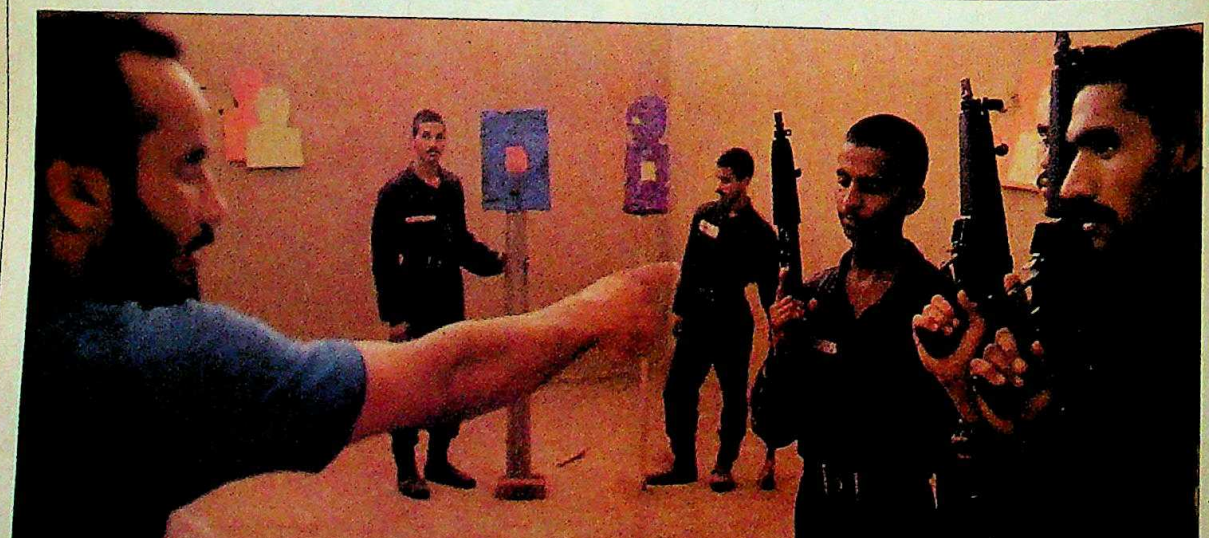

An instructor teaching close quarter battle tactics; and fighting terrorists in a hijacked bus (top left)

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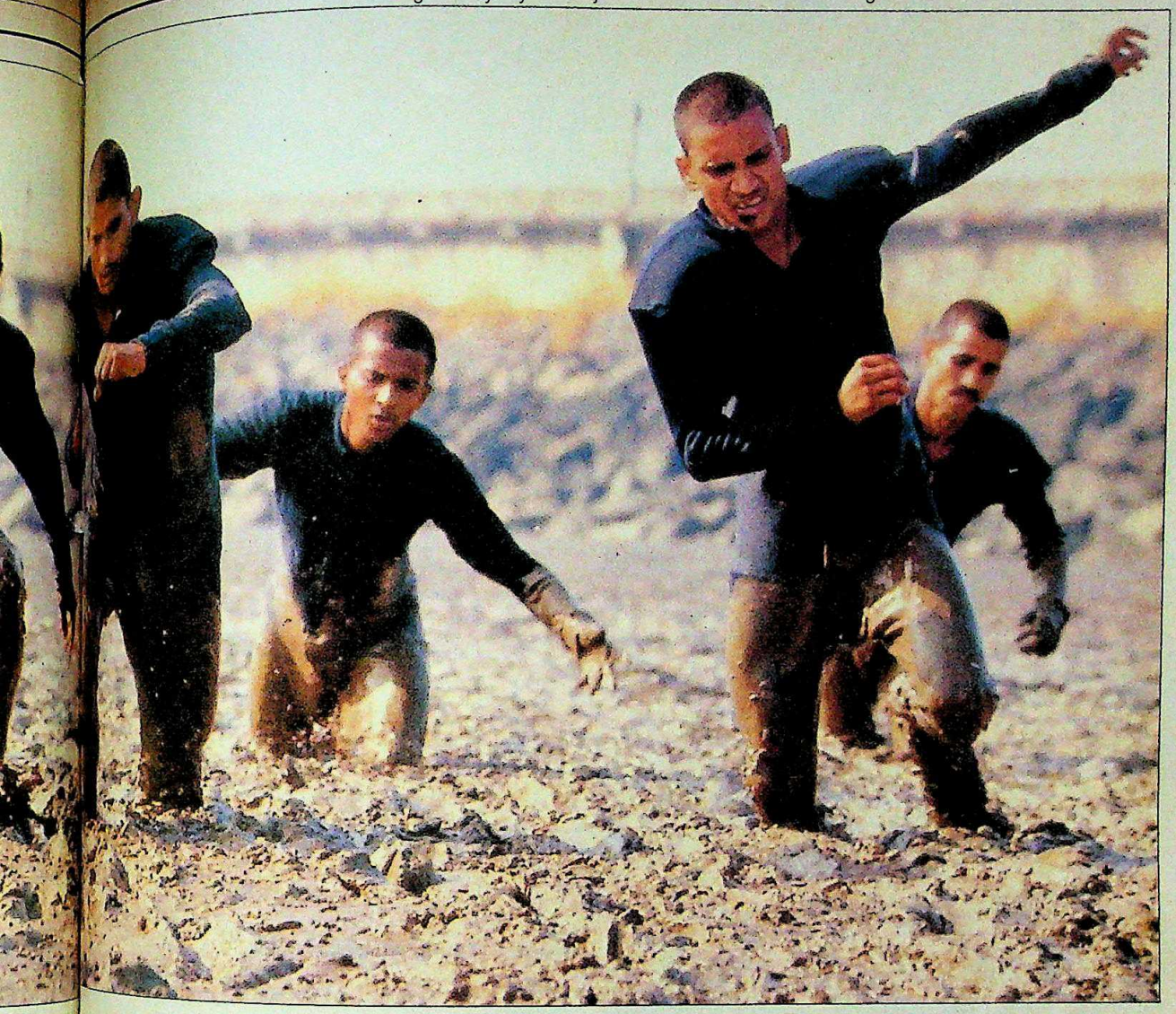

The gruelling 200-metre mud crawl pushes trainees to the limits of physical and mental endurance.

jacks PT, running up to 8.5 km and swimming up to 4 km. And the dreaded 200m mud crawl in which any movement is excruciating after the first 15 steps. Says Lt. K.G. Vishwanathan, who does it in just 22 minutes to a newcomer's one hour: "You just have to psyche yourself to complete it."

THEN the UT (under trainee) learns the use of the MP-5s, AK-47s, sniper rifles and the crossbow. Only those who score over 80 per cent hits are acceptable. In the amphibious phase, the UT learns to use the Chariot, make beach assaults and attacks on offshore installations. Notes Lt. V.P.S. Rawat, a UT officer: "We simulate actual war scenarios." The trainee also undergoes courses in photo-interpretation, intelligence gathering and jungle warfare. The graduates go on to wear the coveted round 'Marine Commando' badge, in black and gold, with the dagger-and-anchor insignia that sets them apart from the rest of the men in white. Says Lt. K. Dhir, an Operation Pawan veteran: "Our boys have the go. When we train with others, they find something new in us."

The MCF's skills have also been battle-tested. In fact, barely a year after its creation, the group was baptised by fire. Its men spearheaded the Indian Army landings at Jaffna and Batticaloa in Operation Pawan, often clearing mines from beaches and channels under LTTE fire. MCF's Lt. Arvind Singh won a Mahavir Chakra, one of the nine awarded to navymen since Independence. And in just five years of existence, the MCF, whose real strength is a closely-guarded secret, has participated in as many as six operations, including Operation Cactus and the still classified Operation Zodiac. Asserts Vice-Admiral B.Guha, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff: "The MCF has added a vital dimension to the gamut of naval operations and tactics." ■

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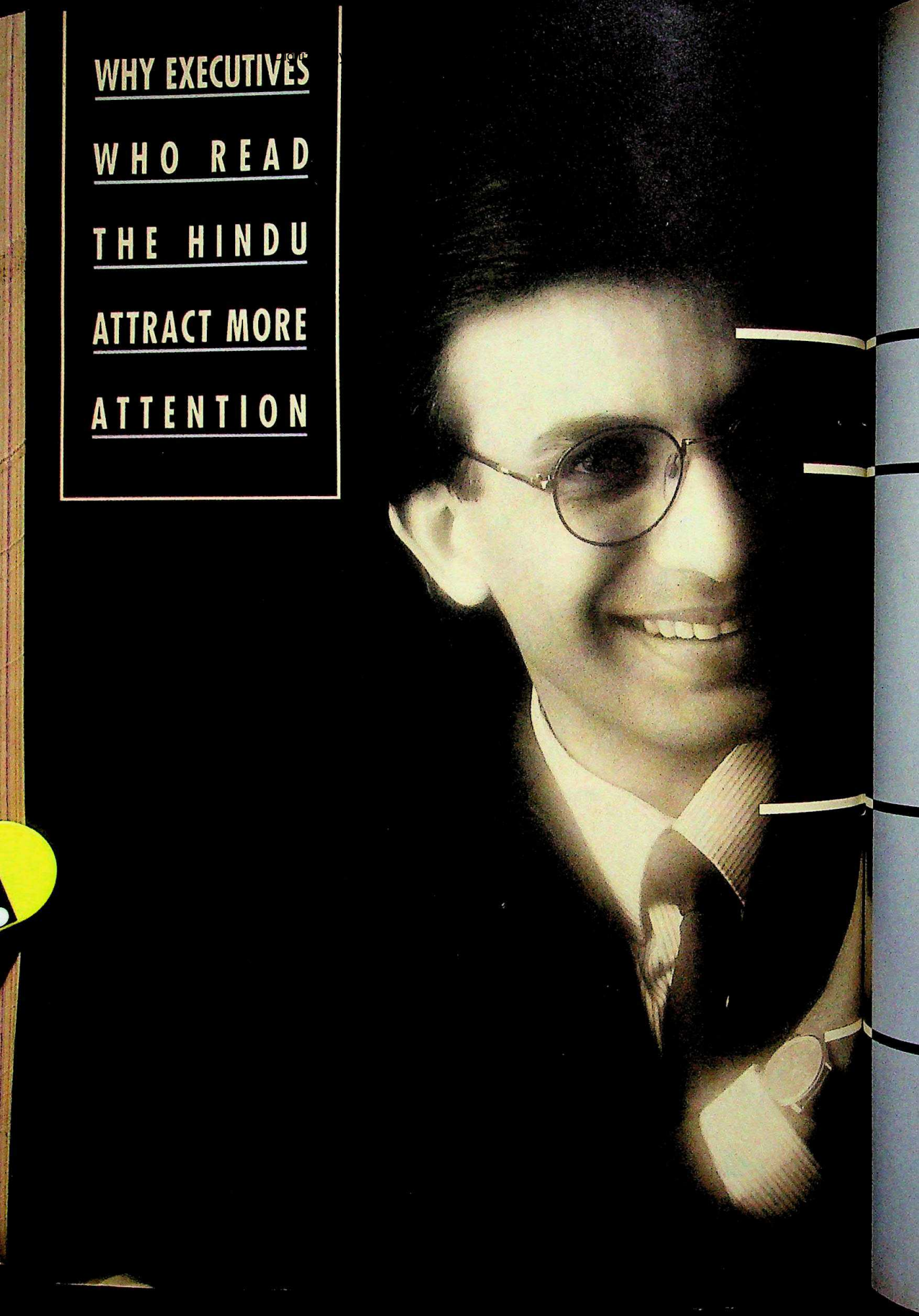
WHO READ

THE HINDU

ATTRACT MORE

ATTENTION



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On the lookout for shares to invest in

Designer shirt

Latest in watches

The Hindu. Read by the largest number of people in your key target segment - people with buying power. Those with a monthly household income exceeding Rs. 4000/- and those in the topmost socio-economic strata. Consider these facts:

THE HINDU

Total readership : 21,44,000

Readers with a household income of over Rs.4000/- per month:

Total : 3,47,000

Women : 1,16,000

Readers in topmost socio-economic strata:

Total : 7,63,000

Women : 2,21,000

So, the next time you want a quality response, reach for The Hindu. The daily that gives you quality readership. More than any other daily in South India.

Data Source: IMRB - MediaSearch NRS IV (1990) State-wise reports.

THE HINDU

REACHES MORE PEOPLE WITH MORE BUYING POWER

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LINTAS M TH EX 2738

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ARE OBSOLETE RADIALS TAKING YOU FOR A RIDE?

All radials are not the same.

When you want the best radial tyre for your car, find out what's under the tread. Steel. Or ordinary textile fabric. Or fibreglass.

Fabric or fibreglass can never match the efficacy of steel. Only steel belted radials enhance the performance of your car. By way of increased fuel efficiency, more mileage and better road grip on any and every kind of road.

That's why 97% of the world rides on steel belted radials.

So give your car the advantage of steel. Feel the unmatched power and safety of steel radials while braking, cornering and driving, even on wet roads.

Switch to the world-class steel radial. Only from JK. It's the Real Radial.

Write in to know more about the Real Radial to Mr. S.V. Srinivasan, Radial Club, J.K. Industries Ltd., 3, Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002

THE REAL RADIAL

JK STEEL RADIAL

JK TYRE

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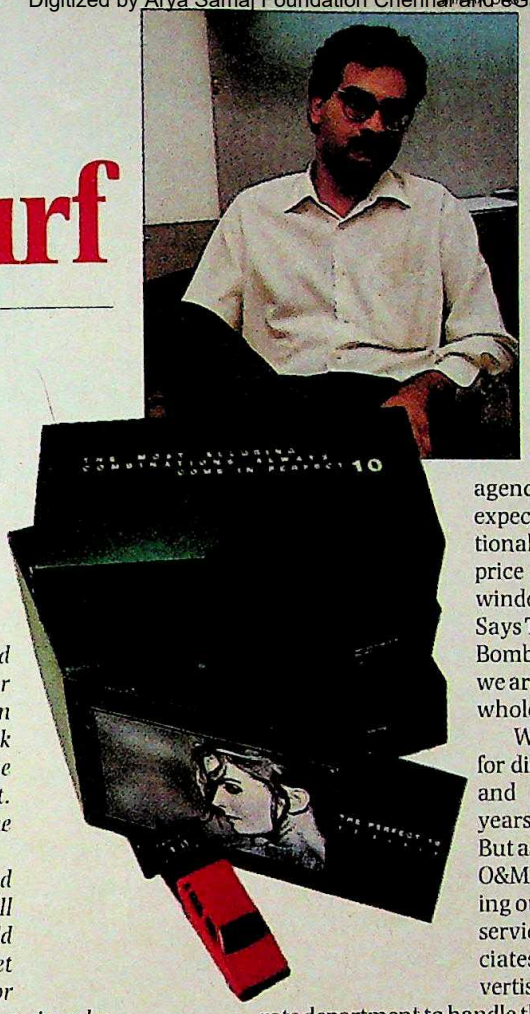
ADVERTISING

Brand New Turf

As competition hots up, companies rope in agencies to give their marketing strategies a selling edge.

By SHEFALI BHIMAL



▸ *When Mudra Diversified was asked to sell Maruti's 'Perfect 10' bulk-buy offer to corporate clients, it came up with an intricate gift box with pictures of Bo Derek and Nadia Comaneci on each flap. As the flaps opened, a small Maruti rolled out. Result: inquiries for the offer flooded the distributor's office.*

▸ *When Cadbury's Gems were packed in an oblong metallic case, they didn't sell too much. Ogilvy and Mather (O&M) told the company to shape the case like a rocket that could double as a pencil box for children. Result: A 100-per cent increase in sales.*

IN marketing jargon, Mudra Diversified and O&M were involved in 'brand strategy'. Till now that area was the protected preserve of managers who believed they knew everything that was worth knowing about the four P's of marketing: product, packaging, pricing and promotion. If the merchants of illusion were involved, it was only at the last stage: promoting a product through advertisement campaigns.

All that is beginning to change. Rapidly. In the past two years, marketing managers of several leading companies are hiring advertising agencies to evolve core strategy. They expect them to orchestrate promotional gimmicks, package products, price them and even devise enticing window displays and shop interiors. Says T.C. Ajit, general manager of the Bombay-based O&M: "Increasingly, we are becoming a one-stop shop for a whole range of marketing activity."

"Marketing managers are now relying on advertising agencies for total communications, unlike before."

SANDIP VIJ, *Branch Director, Mudra Diversified*

When O&M set up separate units for direct marketing, public relations and promotional campaigns three years ago, the industry was sceptical. But as cash registers started ringing at O&M, others followed its lead in carving out areas in integrated marketing services. Hindustan Thompson Associates Ltd., the country's largest advertising company, established a separate department to handle this. Lintas, another major player, immediately set up 'Market Links'. And Mudra Communications Ltd followed hot on their heels with Mudra Diversified. With the example of foreign advertising agencies before them—60 per cent of their turnover now comes from non-media activity—other agencies too are jumping into the fray. Trikaya Grey Advertising Ltd., already has three units while Everest and Tara Sinha McCann Erickson also plan to join the battle for the consumer's pocketbook.

If marketing managers are welcoming the encroach-

HEMANT PITHWA

"We have to be a one-stop shop. How much can a branch manager do? Can he create campaigns or push the product on the shelf?"

T.C. AJIT, *General Manager Ogilvy & Mather*

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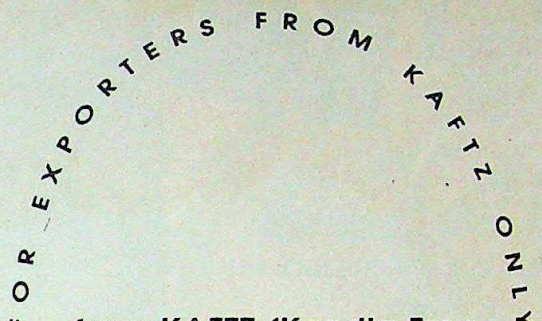

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KAFTZ

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Chaitra-B K 159

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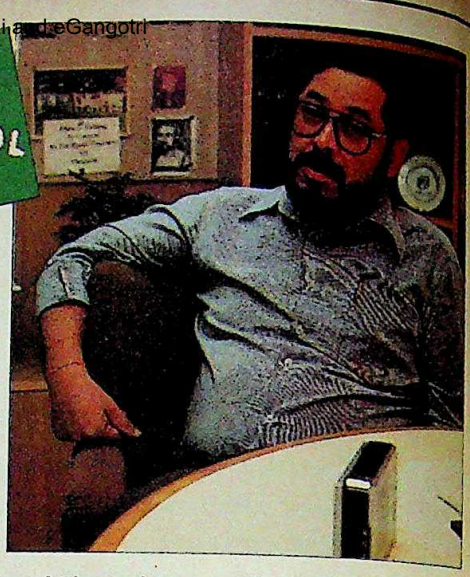


"With competition high, the dependence on us is growing."

NIKHIL NEHRU, *Executive Vice-President Hindustan Thompson Associates*

ment into their turf, it is because selling is now a high stakes business. The new consumerism in the country has ensured a high degree of awareness among buyers and more brands to choose from. Competition is tough, as is the cost involved in marketing a product. As Mahesh K. Enjeti, manager of Welcomgroup's marketing services, says: "The rate of failure is now high and so is the cost. There is now need for far more aggressive selling. And the synergy with agencies offers a new, fresh perspective."

IT is more than just that. Marketing is an area now crying out for originality, innovation, creativity and aggression. A combination of talents that few marketing departments can have in house. Enter the advertising agency with its new fleet of brand strategists, replacing the earlier emphasis on just mass media campaigns which were flagging in impact. As Pratik Basu, general manager of Market Links, Lintas, says: "The battle is no longer restricted to the image. New methods of communication are necessary to convince the consumer to buy a particular product."

And the difference is being felt. For instance, when ITC wanted to solidify Classic cigarette sales, it roped in Lintas. Identifying over 30,000 brand smokers, the agency established a link with personal calls, birthday greetings, invitations to exclusive events and get-togethers. And, like its other competitors, it is going even further.

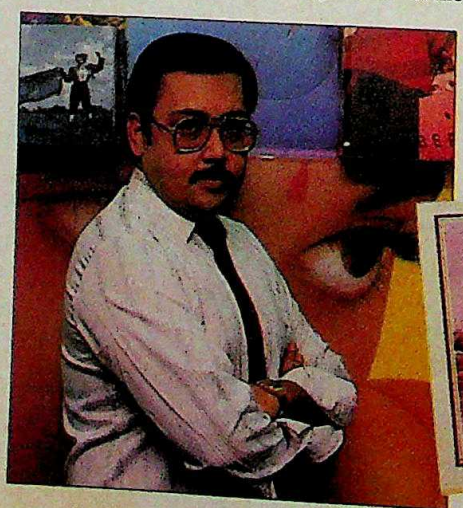
Agencies are now deciding things like product position and pricing—hitherto the monopoly of a company's marketing department. After a devastating two-year strike, when Aristocrat wanted to come back into the market, Trikaya Grey turned to the moulded luggage business. With its strategy in the bag, Aristocrat plunged into the traditional Rs 1,000-crore market of plywood suitcases and steel trunks, selling more suitcases than ever before. And when Big Fun, an established leader in the 20-paise bubblegum market, wanted to raise sales, the same agency suggested that it target the higher-priced segment. It took a lot of persuasion, but finally Big Fun became market leaders for the more expensive chewing gum segment.

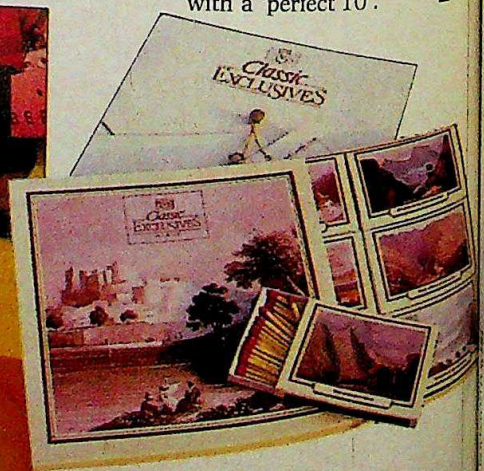
So far, the marriage between marketing and advertising seems to be working well. There are problems, of course. The lack of experience has seen many of the so-called 'hot-shot' strategies evolved by some agencies fail. Corporate clients are finding it hard to pin accountability on agencies as they do on their own marketing staff. And advertising agencies are finding it hard to keep professionally trained staff to meet the wide-ranging demands on their skills.

But the trend of hiring advertising agencies for a broad range of marketing services seems to be taking root. Vibha Paul Rishi, marketing manager for Pepsi Foods Private Ltd, predicts: "A lot more companies will be employing fewer people and leaving a lot of leg work to the agencies." Which the advertising agencies hope to execute with a 'perfect 10'. ■

"The battle is no longer one of image. Communication methods are being devised to ensure the consumer doesn't change his mind."

PRATIK BASU, *General Manager Market Links, Lintas*





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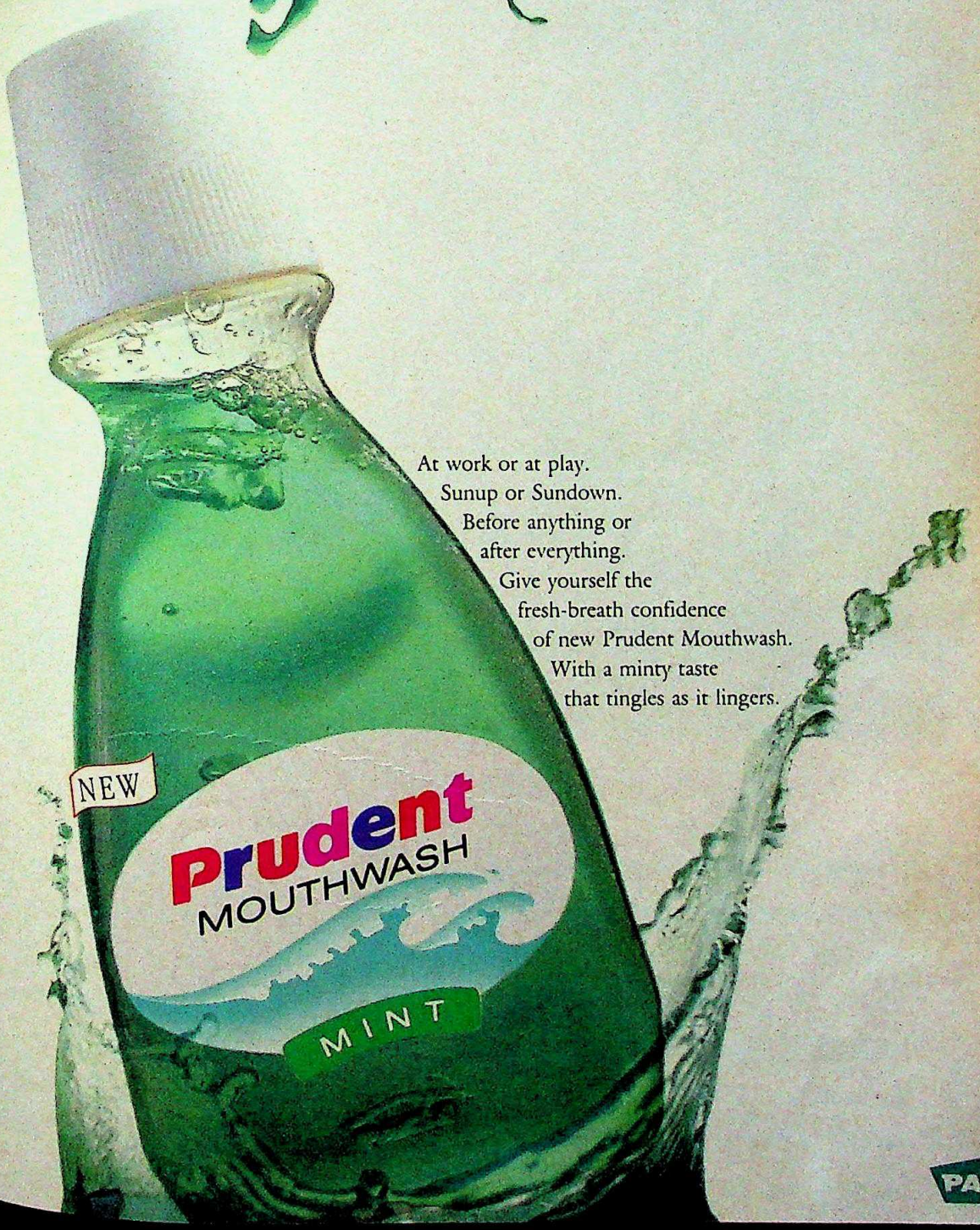
Liquid Confidence!



At work or at play.
Sunup or Sundown.
Before anything or
after everything.
Give yourself the
fresh-breath confidence
of new Prudent Mouthwash.
With a minty taste
that tingles as it lingers.

PARLE

ANYTIME FRESH BREATH GARGLE

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SPLEN

Pure gold and mirror inlay work at Sunehri Kothi, Tonk

A touch of the regal is the very spirit of Rajasthan. ■ And a holiday in her cradle is to experience the headiness of fine living. ■ In the silent awe as we gaze upon the Lake Pavilion of Rani Padmini. Whose mere reflection, the legend says, so captivated Allauddin Khilji that a war was fought. ■ Or in the riotous colour and sparkle of the *ghoomer*, a dance full of a lilting rhythm as beautiful women describe fluid circles. ■ Wander through the turmeric sands of Haldi Ghati, seeing in the mind's eye, the faithful steed Chetak bearing its wounded master, Maharana Pratap, to safety. ■ Watch, as though in a trance, the sheer feline grace as the tiger stretches lazily at the water's edge at Ranthambor, its favourite Indian home. ■ Revel in the art and skill handed through generations as it manifests in the world renowned enamel craftsmanship - *meenakari*. ■ Rajasthan. ■ Its colours, the colours of life itself. As too, its sheer

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ND OUR

Living splendour as the tiger prowls Ranthambor

variety. ■ And the todays melt away into a continuous past, as you savour the splendour of Rajputana. ■ Splendour. For as long as valour adds colour to the land.

SUGGESTED CIRCUITS

- MATSYA CIRCUIT : Jaipur-Sariska-Alwar-Deeg-Bharatpur-Jaipur
- DESERT TRIANGLE : Jaipur-Ajmer-Jodhpur-Osian-Jaisalmer-Barmer - Bikaner
- SHEKHAWATI CIRCUIT : Jaipur-Sikar-Navalgarh-Mandava-Jhunjhunun - Fatehpur-Jaipur
- PROJECT TIGER CIRCUIT : Jaipur-Tonk-Ranthambor-Jaipur
- MEWAR-HADOTI CIRCUIT : Udaipur-Chittorgarh-Menal-Bundi-Kota-Jhalawar
- MEWAR-MT. ABU CIRCUIT : Udaipur-Kumbhalgarh-Ranakpur - Mt. Abu-Sirohi

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Don't compromise the life of your engine

Like your body and heart need good blood, an engine needs good engine oil.

The oil in your engine works much like the blood in your body which is continuously pumped around a network of large and small tubes and comes back to be revitalized and filtered. Like blood, a good oil has to keep flowing without clogging or choking, that may cause heart attacks or engine seizure.

Small wonder then, that millions of people around the world depend on **Castrol GTX** to extend the life of their engine and keep it fighting fit. The international formula of **Castrol GTX** is engineered to protect your engine through thick and thin, month after month, under engine conditions ranging from Arctic cold to the sizzling engine heat and at pressures ranging upto ten tons per square inch.

That's why we call **Castrol GTX** formulation, a 'Liquid Engineering' marvel – the lifeblood of your engine. Use **Castrol GTX** – a superior SF/CC multigrade engine oil and be assured of silent, smooth running and longer engine life.

Castrol GTX

The lifeblood of your engine

Castrol

World Champion Lubricants

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NO STEAM IN SCHEMES

THE Government's desperate bid to attract foreign exchange through various financial incentives doesn't seem to be working too well. The tax-free foreign exchange remittance scheme and the India Development Bonds were expected to yield $2 billion (Rs 5,000 crore) by the end of November. But at best these are likely to attract only Rs 1,500 crore. Another dismal performance came from the National Housing Bank's black money voluntary disclosure scheme. The scheme was to end on November 30 but the Government is planning to extend the last date to March. The reason: so far, it has yielded only Rs 32 crore. Experts predict that the extension is unlikely to lead to any dramatic disclosures.

REVVING UP

THE Madras-based Standard Motors finally seems to be on the road to rehabilitation. With the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction last month announcing a Rs 34.26-crore package for its revival, the company is busy getting its factory spruced up again. It will discontinue production of cars and instead focus on introducing a more fuel-efficient engine for its Standard Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV), streamlining the workforce and strengthening the management structure. The package will be financed partly by the state Government and financial institutions and the company's promoter will chip in with Rs 6.03 crore. Also, the state Government will buy around 1,000 of its LCVs every year.

WEST HEADS EAST

AS international marketing is becoming increasingly important, companies are adopting various promotion methods. In industry, tie-ups are being forged with leading groups abroad to take advantage of their networks. For hoteliering, a different route is being followed—of 'marketing franchises'. In Delhi last fortnight, Best Western International (BWI) got government permission to set up shop in India. BWI is an umbrella organisation that promotes and provides marketing services to 3,300 hotels in 37 countries. This service provides hotels access to a worldwide reservation system and a rating which matters to international tourists. By 1995 it plans to bring in about 50 Indian hotels within its fold and list them in its directories which enjoy a circulation of eight million in the US. Whether this provides the much-needed fillip to the sagging tourism industry in India is to be seen. The movement towards internationalisation is, however, clear.

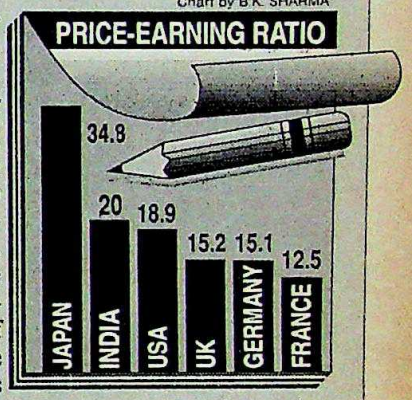
CUTTING CLAUSES

THE IBM-Tata computer project has had an unexpected fall-out. According to Industry Ministry sources, certain "standard conditions" are attached—almost by rote—to every approval for foreign collaboration. Among them is a condition that the Indian company would be free to sub-license the technical know-how and product design within the country. Another states that any consultancy required will have to be obtained from an Indian firm. IBM was unwilling to accept many of these clauses and the Government gave in. Officials then carried out a complete review of these clauses and found most were "redundant". Result: by mid-December, most of these conditions will be done away with.

RATIO RATIONALE

WHILE the current boom in the Indian stock-market appears to be slowing, speculators hope that the next surge is around the corner. Especially as the Government continues to liberalise the policy environment. But for those who are euphoric, experts point to an indicator that may determine the shape of things to come: price-earnings ratio. That is the ratio of the market price of the shares to the annual dividend earnings from them. This is already too high in India in comparison with other countries, except for Japan where the stock prices are traditionally high because of intense speculation. The problem is that once this ratio gets too high, it is difficult to sustain it, and a market crash is usually imminent. In India, it is already very high—warning bells for those happy bulls.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



FANNING OUT

USHA International Ltd, a Rs 130-crore Shriram Group company, will soon be diversifying into an altogether new sector: the hotel industry. This will be the first-ever venture of the company in this area. The company, a major player in the consumer goods sector, is targeting the middle income segment and will be setting up three-star projects, in five different cities of northern India. While details have still to be worked out, these would be located in areas without adequate hotel facilities. Given the current dismal state of Indian tourism, the diversification may not be quite so appealing for the profit oriented Charat Ram company.

CLEANING THE STABLE

LIQUOR baron Vijay Mallya earlier horsed around for good companies to add to his stable. Now to gallop faster, he has decided to make them lean and healthy. The NRI tycoon has embarked on a gameplan to financially restructure his group. Reportedly, Mallya has sold off his 11-per cent stake in Cadburys India Ltd to Unit Trust of India. Plans are also afoot to disinvest in Bush Boake Allen, another of its subsidiaries.

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FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Still Fighting Shy

Low returns despite the new open-door policy

By SUNIL JAIN with SHEFALI BHIMAL

WHEN Dieter Haury, managing director, German Asia-Pacific Business Association, arrived in New Delhi last fortnight he was prepared for bureaucracy. But not the kind of harassment he faced when his suitcase failed to arrive from Frankfurt. After two agonising visits to the airport he finally did recover his luggage. But as he says: "Never before have I put my signature in so many places to get something done. The big problem here is that you continue to have too many procedural delays."

Haury heads an organisation that has 800 German industrialists from different sectors as members. He was part of a high-power German delegation led by Economic Minister Juergen W. Mollemann that held talks with senior ministers and secretaries on doing business with India. But the impressions Haury takes back to investors can hardly be flattering.

In fact, four months after the Government announced its radical economic package that included a more open-door policy towards foreign investment, multinational companies are still wary of stepping in. While the RBI has cleared as many as 255 foreign proposals, the number is misleading. Combined, these projects have an equity of $65 million (Rs 170 crore)—barely a fifth of what the Government had hoped for. Of these, hardly a handful are big names (*see chart*).

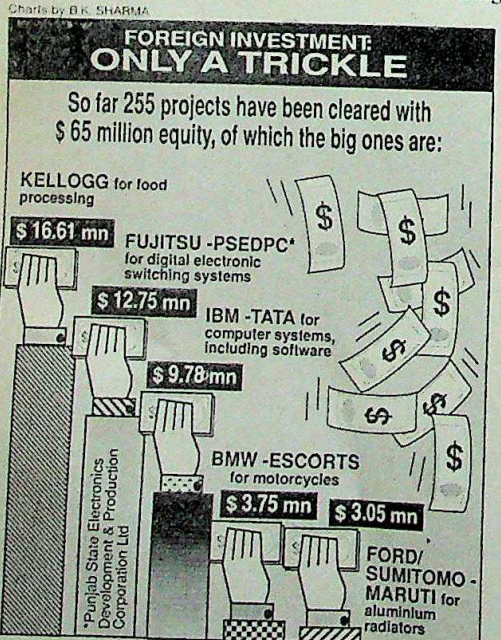
The Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB), set up by the Government as a single window clearing agency for multinationals, has not been too active either. Last fortnight it met executives of three US giants—Coca Cola, General Electric and General Motors—to discuss what a senior Industry Ministry official calls, "concepts they had submitted". The board has now asked them for concrete proposals.

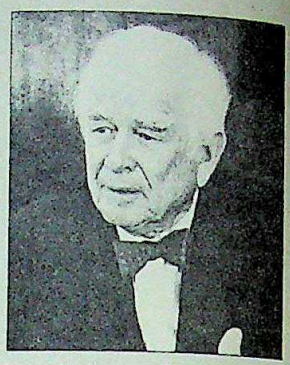
Even when they do so, these projects are unlikely to get quick clearance. There are several hurdles. For instance, the Coca Cola proposal to set up a $20-million snack-food and beverages project is likely to get mired in the implications it would have on the Pepsi project which was cleared with stringent export commitments. On the General Motors $50 million project for light commercial vehicles, doubts were raised about how much foreign exchange the project would bring in.

Meanwhile, in mid-December, the board will scrutinise "concepts" to be submitted by Caltex and Shell for petroleum products and by Motorola and Hewlett-Packard for electronics. These offers have made government officials optimistic. Principal Secretary to the prime minister, A.N. Varma, who heads the FIPB, says: "Things are beginning to gather momentum."

However, a cross-

Charts by B.K. SHARMA





"Formidable forces still remain opposed to reform in the country."

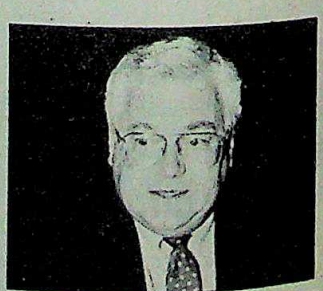
DONALD M. KENDALL
Chairman, Pepsico
Group Turnover: $18 billion

"It will be at least another 10 years before we make a really big investment in this country."

K.W. STRIPGEN
Managing Director, Mannesmann Demag, Metallurgical Division
Group Turnover: $14 billion

"Inspectors remain, power sanctions aren't easier."

ROBERT WERNER
Vice-President, International Division, Timex Corporation
Group Turnover: $600 million



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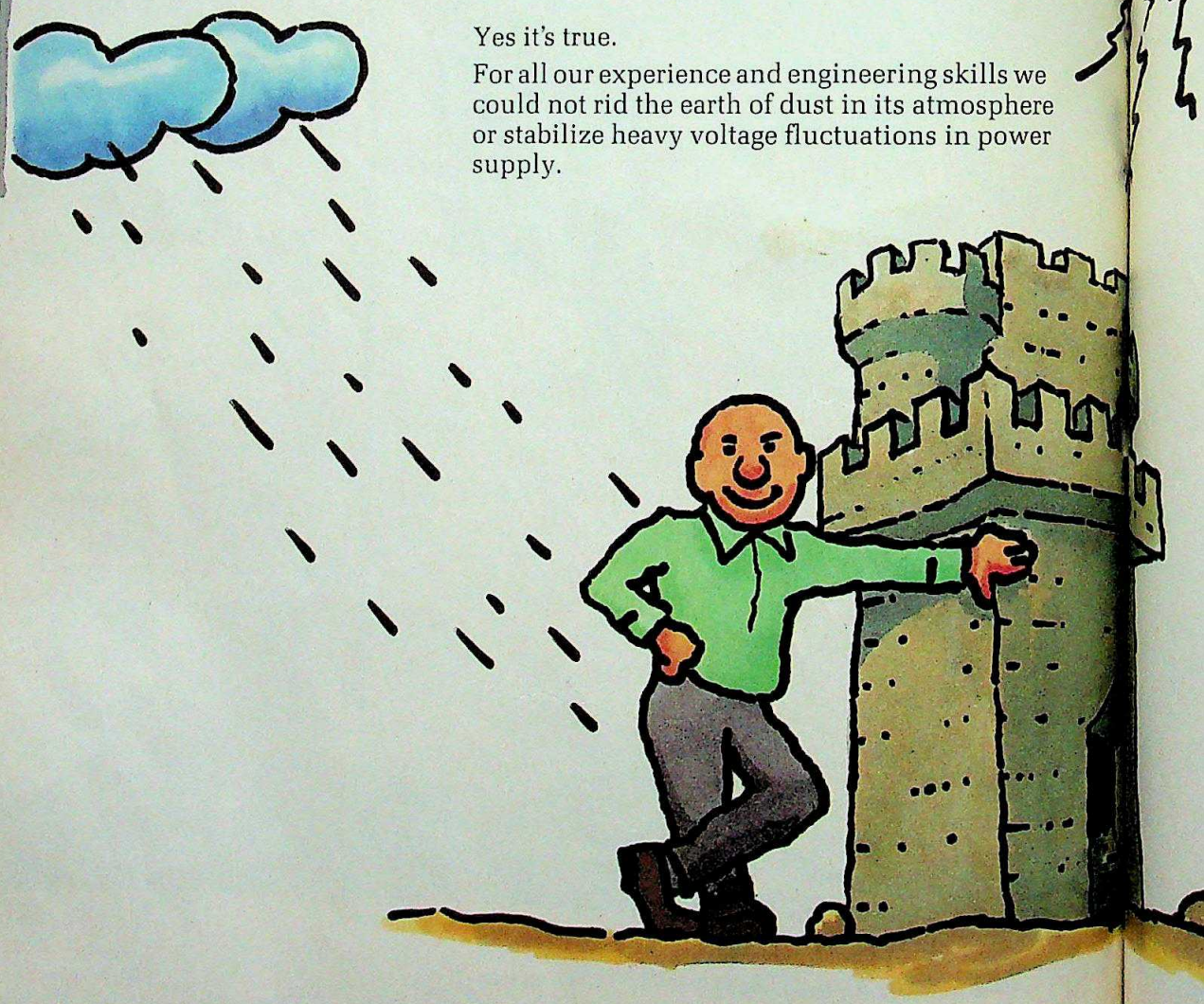

Yes it's true.

For all our experience and engineering skills we could not rid the earth of dust in its atmosphere or stabilize heavy voltage fluctuations in power supply.

KIRLOSKAR BROTHERS LTD. UDYOG BHAVAN, TILAK ROAD, PUNE 411 002 INDIA

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Or lower the high ambient temperatures in the tropics.

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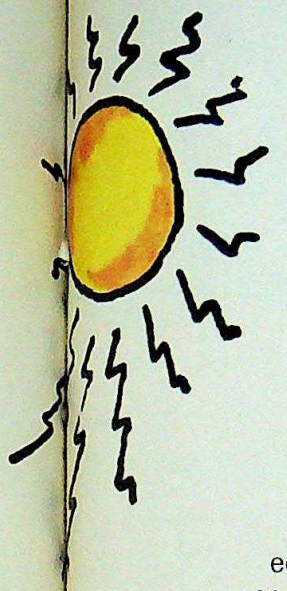

A typical KBL response when confronted with challenge.

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Pitted against heavy odds, our engineers gave it all they had, to adapt the American technology to make our compressors stand up defiantly to dusty Indian conditions and harsh tropical summers. Not to mention the massive voltage fluctuations.

We've always made efforts to understand customer requirements. Like we did for the small scale air-conditioner assembler. Our upgraded products reduced the need for special equipment to dehumidify and evacuate the system before assembly. So also the need for a dust free atmosphere.

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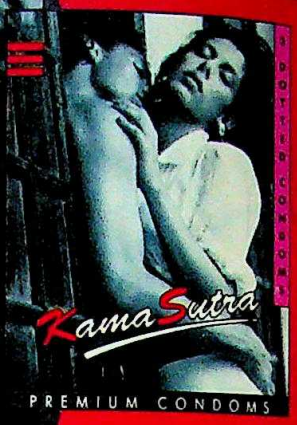
The Kamasutra On Courting A Maid



...The man should do whatever the girl takes real delight in, and he should get for her whatever she may have a desire to possess

(Book III, Part II)

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"The pace of current reform must be trebled, or else the package will collapse."

KLAUS SCHWAB
President, World Economic Forum

"How do you invest in a country when you can't even contact the head office on phone without it getting cut off?"

DEEPAK MUKARJI
Communications Manager—South Asia, Du Pont Far East Inc
Group Turnover: $40 billion

"We get a lot more incentives in South East Asian markets."

DIETER HAURY
Managing Director, German Asia-Pacific Business Association

THE BIG PROPOSALS: STATUS REPORT

COMPANY	INVESTMENT ($ million)	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
COCA-COLA for snack food and beverages	$20	How to equate it with the Pepsi project
GENERAL MOTORS for cars/LCVs	$50	Details wanted on export angle, project financing
DU PONT for petrochemicals	$15	Unclear
GENERAL ELECTRIC for "white goods"	n.a.	This is not a priority area, but GE is a world leader
MOTOROLA for electronics	n.a.	To be discussed
HEWLETT-PACKARD for electronics	n.a.	To be discussed
CALTEX for petroleum sector	n.a.	To be discussed
SHELL for petroleum sector	n.a.	To be discussed

section of the opinions put forward by the visiting international corporate bigwigs didn't reflect the Government's optimism. The major fear was that while the regulations were gone, India's famed bureaucrats would find new ways to create roadblocks. Says Hans-Dietrich von Bermuth, president of Faun GmbH, one of Germany's largest crane manufacturers: "For 40 years, administration in India has been geared in a particular manner. The filtering-down process will take at least a year."

The measures to streamline procedures seem only to have confused them. Last week, the Government declared that foreign companies with existing tie-ups could increase their equity to 51 per cent. In doing so it removed the anomaly in its policy that initially made this concession only to new ventures. But it caused fresh problems. The price at which such shares are to be bought or sold, with limited exceptions, will be decided by the Controller of Capital Issues, a prospect foreign businessmen find repugnant. K.W. Stripgen, chief of the Metallurgical Division of Mannesmann Demag, the machinery giant, says: " India is replacing one set of rules with another." For instance, despite FIPB clearance, IBM still needs the Department of Company Affairs' sanction to pay high salaries to senior executives.

They had other concerns too. Top on the list was whether the P.V. Narasimha Rao Government would survive and whether the liberalisation drive would be pursued. When pressed on this point at the World Economic Forum meet last week, Narasimha Rao turned unusually fiery and said: "I will fight any force in the country that opposes the economic reforms."

While that seems to reassure the industrialists, other problems persist. Among them is dealing with state governments and their bureaucracy. Robert Werner, vice-president, Timex, which has tied up for a Rs 100-crore joint venture with the Tatas to manufacture watches in Uttar Pradesh, seems to know just how tough things can get. Says he: "Whether the state governments will make investment simpler is the key question. Will getting land or a power sanction become easier? Will the factory inspectors go away?"

The other problem is the worldwide capital squeeze. As Mollemann, the German minister points out: "Capital is shy like a deer and will go only where it is welcome." Unfortunately, India is perceived as not being foreign investor-friendly while countries like China and the Philippines go out of their way to welcome capital. For instance, Du Pont's tie-up with the Thapar group for clothing fibre was delayed by four years. So it was forced to set up similar facilities in Singapore. And its project in China to manufacture agricultural chemicals submitted two years ago has already gone on stream.

Most businessmen perceive India as not pursuing aggressively its foreign investment drive. They advise stepping up public relations efforts in major investing countries to make companies aware of the changes. As Mannesmann's Stripgen says: "Time is not on your side." ■

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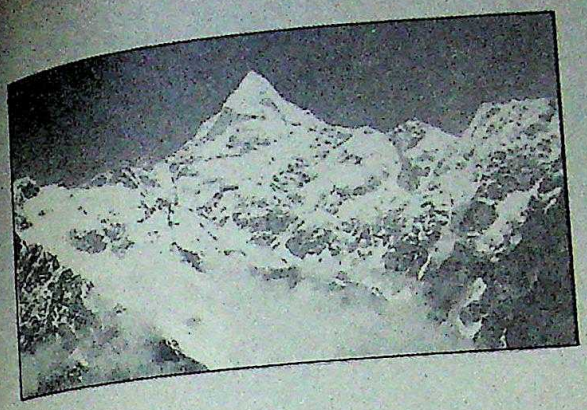

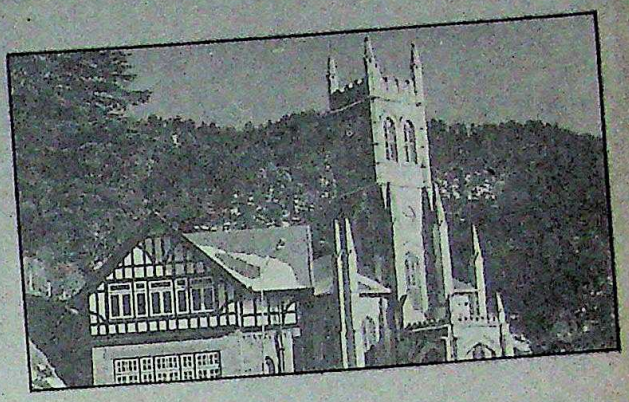

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OIL

Crude Shock

Steep fall in domestic output

OIL only seems to make India's troubled economic waters rougher. In what's turning out to be a year of gloom for the petroleum industry, domestic crude oil production is likely to fall by 4.25 million tonnes. And the situation may worsen by next year.

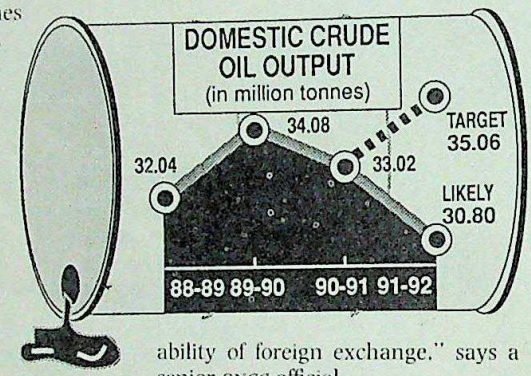
The implications are serious. Indigenous production will be able to meet only 55 per cent of the domestic consumption of 54 million tonnes as compared to around 63 per cent last year. Result: imports of crude would shoot up from 20 million tonnes to 24 million tonnes. "The import bill for this year alone will be about Rs 15,000 crore," says a worried S. Krishna Kumar, minister of state for petroleum.

That is almost Rs 3,000 crore more than what the Government planned to spend on crude imports. This despite the Government freezing oil consumption at the same level for the past three years. Apart from exacerbating the foreign exchange crunch it's likely to further hike the price of petroleum products, and fuel inflation.

According to a note circulated to the Union Cabinet, things seem to have gone wrong right from the beginning of the year. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) was forced to shut down some wells in Bombay High, the largest crude oil source, to repair a deteriorating reservoir. Apparently, the reservoir was damaged because oil was extracted at a faster rate than recommended by experts, leading to a fall in pressure and thereby oil output. That in turn led to a loss of 2.42 million tonnes, a little more than half the anticipated shortfall.

Problems seem to have hit ONGC with regularity after that. In the western offshore terminal, there was a drop in withdrawal rates from its ageing Heera and Ratna oilfields. Meanwhile, extraction from the Jotana, Kalol and Sobhassan oilfields in Gujarat proved to be erratic. The total loss was close to a million tonnes. Other reasons for the drop: turmoil in Assam that saw several oil wells remaining shut, slippages in repair and further expansion plans in other fields by ONGC.

As a result domestic crude oil production is expected to fall for the next two years. Worse, projects to enhance oil and gas production by developing already discovered fields will cost a staggering Rs 35,000 crore. But these will only come on stream in 1994, at the earliest. And the bulk of this total will be in precious foreign exchange that may not be available for ONGC to spend. "Our biggest hurdle is the availability of foreign exchange," says a senior ONGC official.



One avenue that the oil pundits are now exploring is to push up output from current reserves. "The emphasis will be to increase production rather than establish more reserves," says Naresh Dayal, joint secretary in the Union Petroleum Ministry. And yet, there is a case for greater investment in exploration to find more reserves. According to one estimate, ONGC's cost of finding oil is a mere $0.50 per barrel offshore as against $3.00 in Europe and South-East Asia.

The import bill is likely to go up by as much as Rs 3000 crore and fuel inflation.

A possible method of getting the necessary foreign exchange is to throw open all aspects of the oil industry to private and foreign firms and capital. That demand has been made in the past. But so far there is no indication that the winds of liberalisation that have swept through the Finance Ministry will deflect in the direction of the Petroleum Ministry.

—W.P.S. SIDHU

SUGAR

Sour Success

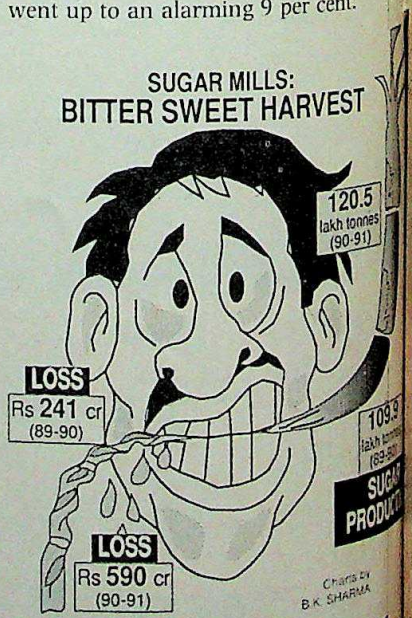
Losses despite record yield

FOR the sugar industry it was to be the best of times. With a bumper cane harvest that saw sugar production cross a record 125 lakh tonnes this year, the country's 377 mills expected to reap syrupy profits.

Yet if its spokesmen are to be believed, it is the worst of times. "The industry is totally sick," says S.L. Jain, executive secretary, Indian Sugar Mills Association. Just how ill is indicated by the combined loss it claims to have suffered: Rs 590 crore. And with mills suffering a loss of Rs 241 crore last year too, most of them are in dire financial straits.

It's not just industry that is feeling sour. Despite the easy availability of sugar in the market, retail prices averaged Rs 10 a kg this year, Re 1.25 more than last year. Just before the festival season began, a panicky Union Government ordered heavy releases of sugar into the open-market—an estimated one lakh tonnes more than last year. This helped push prices down to around Rs 9.50 during Diwali.

That was like putting band-aid on a gaping wound. For faced with mounting losses, mills have begun deferring payment to cane growers. While normally arrears hover around 1 per cent of total cane payments, this year it shot up to as much as 4 per cent. And in Uttar Pradesh, the country's largest sugar producer, arrears to farmers went up to an alarming 9 per cent.



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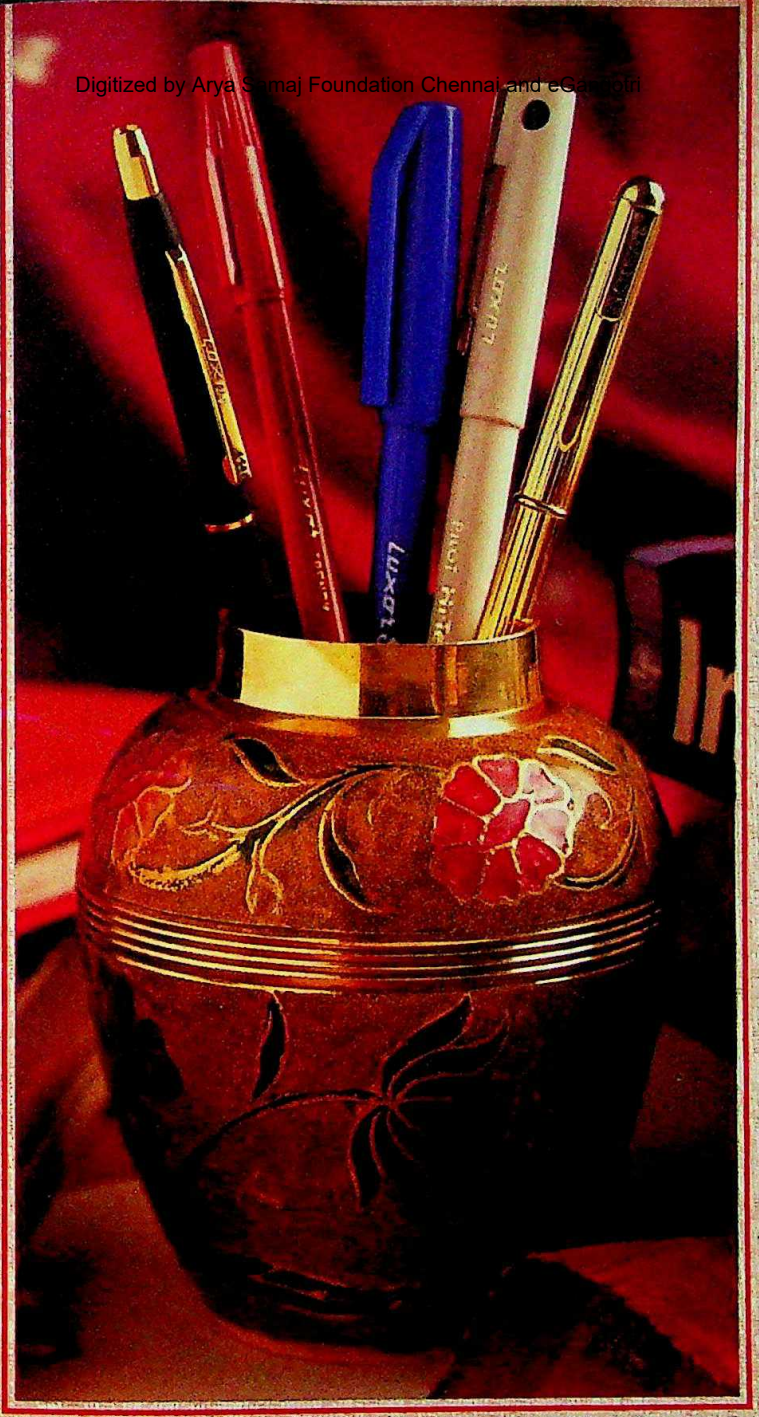

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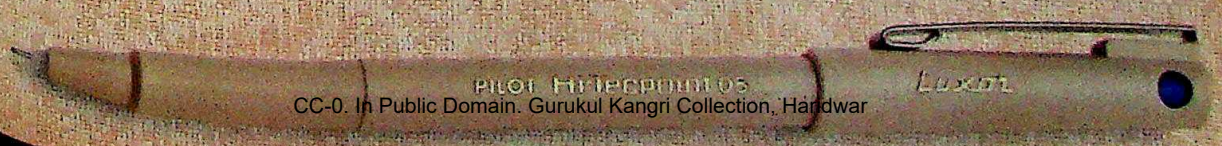

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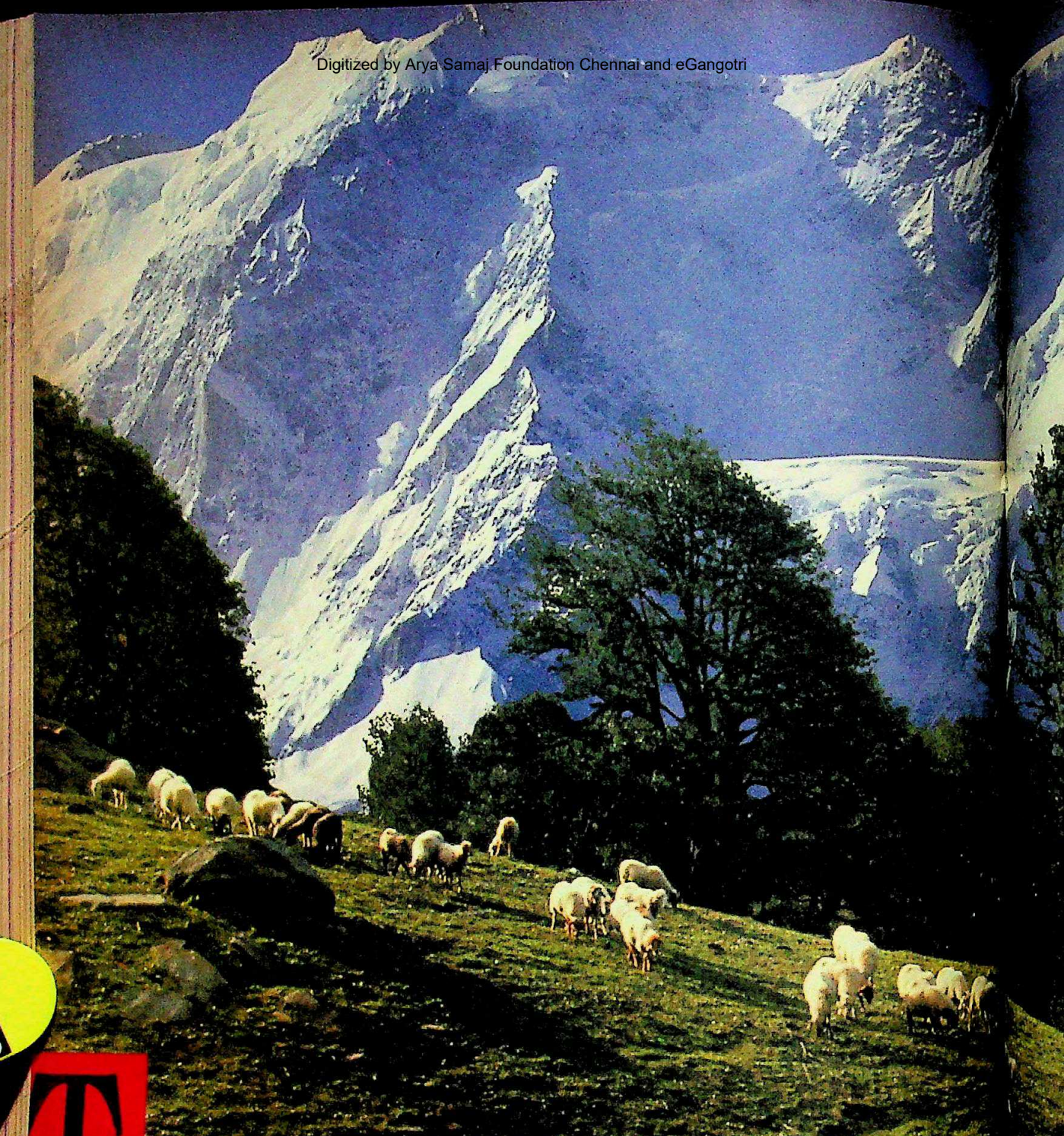

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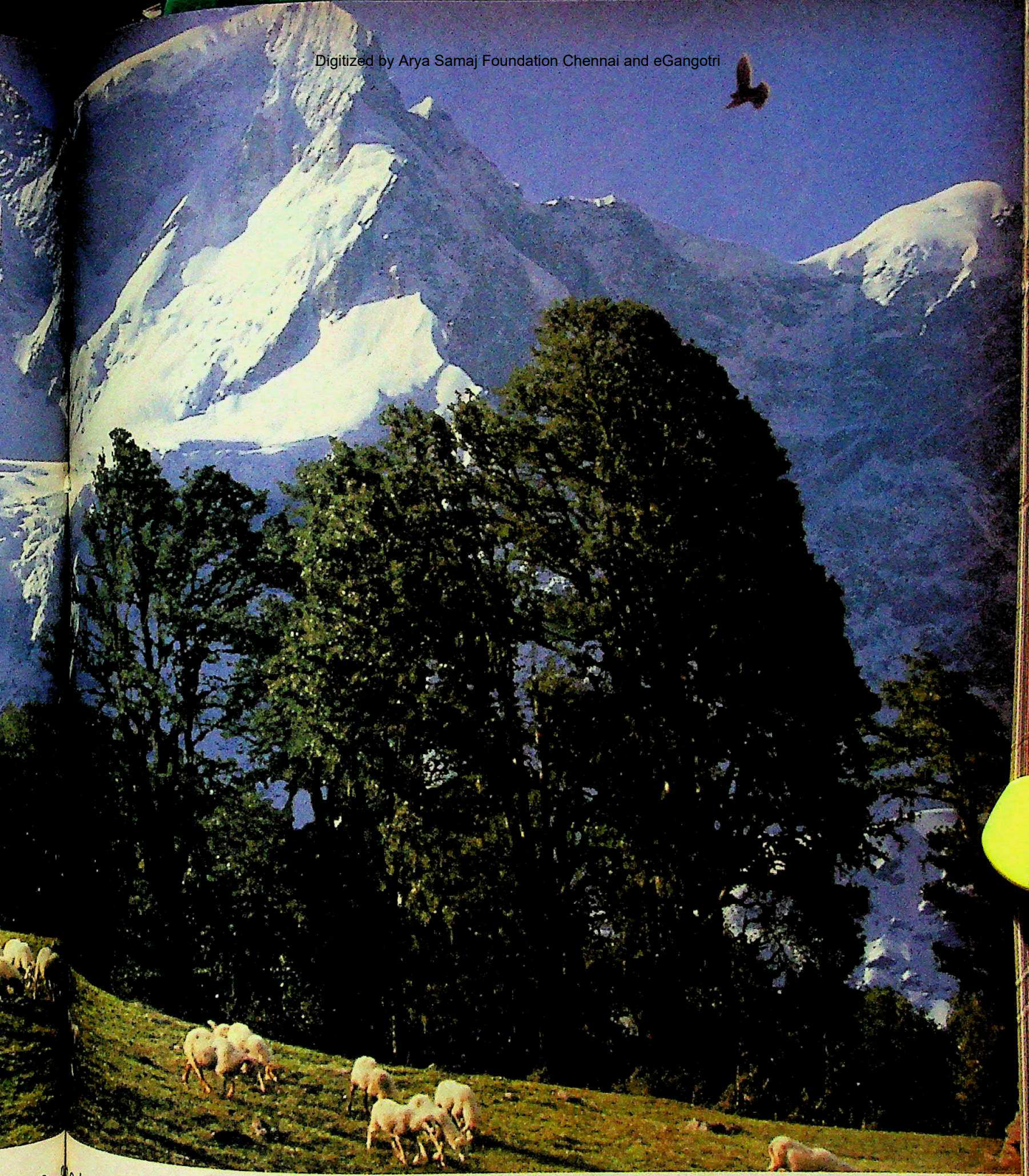

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Systems /996/01

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Talk about earth-shattering. Philips, inventor of the CD, have come up with a range of CD sound-machines capable of pumping out a whopping 160 watts PMPO of pure power at the twirl of a dial.

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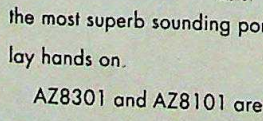
AZ8301


AZ8101

AZ8301 and AZ8101 are no less potent than their bigger brother, what with their graphic equalizers, multi-speaker systems and auto-reverse decks.

All three soundmachines come with a one-year warranty backed by one of the most extensive service networks in the country. And are available, along with other models, at the Philips dealers below.

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Industry circles warn this may set an motion a bitter chain of events. If not paid on time, cane growers may switch to more lucrative crops. That would drop sugar production and kick prices even higher. "We may return to the era of sugar shortages," warns Jain.

That may be an exaggeration, but the industry is definitely in serious trouble. With sugar being a sensitive political issue, the Government has kept the price of sugar artificially low. (Though consumers perceive even current prices as high). This was done by keeping the price of ration sugar down at Rs 6.10 per kg. And controlling the release of free sale sugar to ensure that its price too did not shoot up.

Result: while wholesale prices of all commodities rose by an average of 15 per cent, that of sugar went up only by half as much. "It's now probably the lowest in the world and I don't know how long the industry is going to hold," says Dhruv Sawhney, chairman and managing director of the Triveni Group, a sugar producer.

The industry complains it's caught in a double-bind. Both the Centre and states arbitrarily intervene in fixing cane prices. This year, Central support price of cane is Rs 27 a quintal, as against Uttar Pradesh's Rs 41. While the cost of production of sugar is Rs 6.82 a kg, mills earn only Rs 6.33.

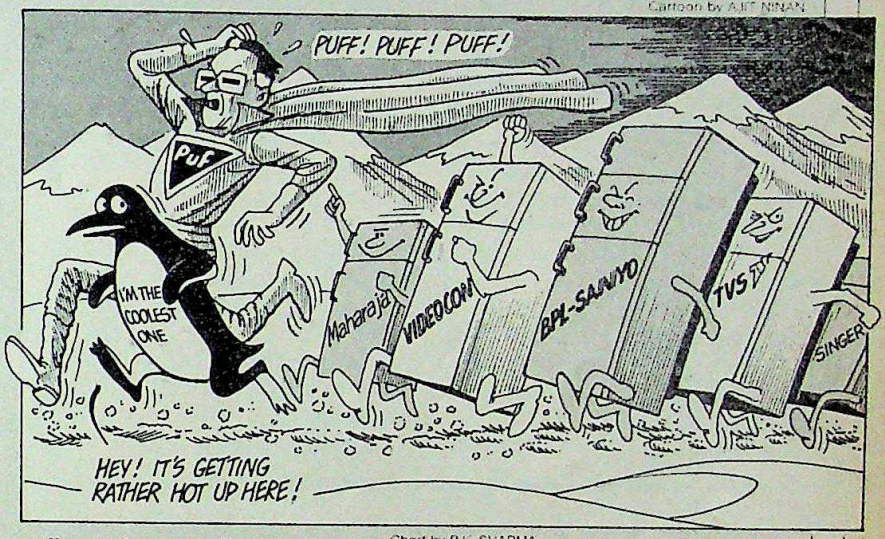
While some feel the solution lies in decontrolling sugar, others want the unwarranted price hikes by state governments to be curbed. But Union food officials are mum about what should be done. Things may remain bitter for everyone.

—VIVIAN FERNANDES

REFRIGERATORS

The Cold War

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



THINGS are suddenly hotting up in the cold business. Just when it seemed that Kelvinator and Godrej, the two giants in the refrigeration industry, would gobble up all the competition, a surge of fresh blood is likely to halt them in their tracks.

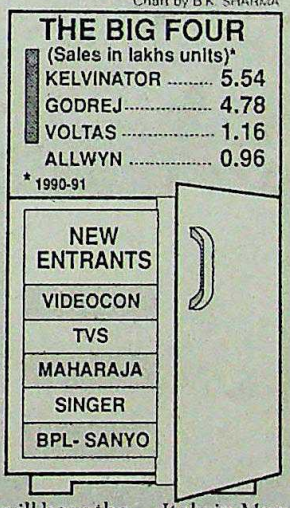
In a phenomenal flurry of investments, at least five new players have joined the race for a share of the Rs 900-crore market. With foreign tie-ups and new fangled technology they hope to loosen the stranglehold that the big two have over the industry. Between themselves Kelvinator and Godrej account for 82 per cent of the total annual sales of 13 lakh refrigerators.

On the starting block already is Videocon Appliances Ltd. Flush with its success in selling washing-machines, the Bombay-based company has tied up with National of Japan to introduce the country's first giant 365-litre model. The proposal is scheduled to take off by Christmas.

Also hoping to create wonders are a host of big names in the consumer goods industry. Among them: BPL-Sanyo, Singer, Maharaja and TVS Whirlpool. Even companies like Modi Threads, Larsen & Toubro and the Chabbria's are planning to enter the market.

Most of them anticipate a high rate of growth in the purchase of refrigerators. Currently the market is growing at around 16 per cent annually, which industry circles, surprisingly, say is "modest and sluggish". They are hoping India's burgeoning middle class and an increasing need for preserving food will push growth rates to an astonishing 25 per cent.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



In absolute terms, the industry expects demand to grow from its current 12.8 lakh to 19.2 lakh by 1994. Despite the additional capacity being installed by the new entrants, the shortfall in supply is expected to be as much as 4.4 lakh—an ample buffer for them to bank on. "It will soon be a buyers' market and consumers will have the right to choose from the best rather than pick from what is available," asserts K.K. Gupta, managing director of Indian Sewing Machine Company Ltd, that will launch the Singer range of refrigerators soon.

While the basic refrigerating technology is almost standardised, where the newcomers are hoping to score is in the area of additional features. For instance, BPL-Sanyo is planning to launch a "frost-free triple-door" refrigerator next summer.

The big guns haven't been keeping quiet. Godrej is seeking government clearance to tie up with General Electric Company of the US to upgrade its technology. Meanwhile, Kelvinator plans to launch a 310-litre "no-frost" model designed in collaboration with Zanussi of Italy in March next year. "Our position is undisputed and we are moving to smaller towns and semi-urban areas to strengthen it," says R.K. Caprihan, Kelvinator's chief marketing manager.

But with consumers likely to have over 10 other brands to choose from, things are not likely to be that cool for the big ones.

—SHEFALI BHIMAL and VIVIAN FERNANDES

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THE MARKETS

Renewed Rise

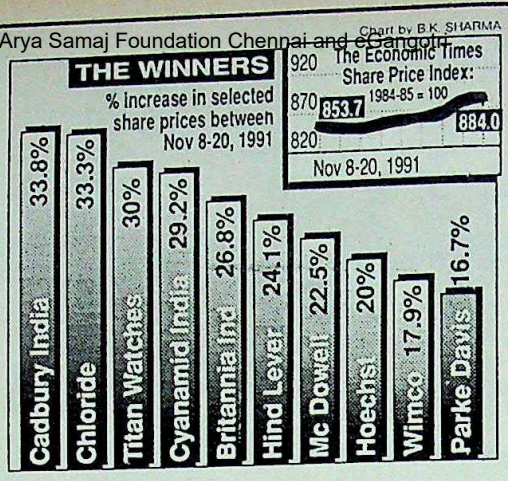
The bulls make merry

THERE is a sense of deja vu in the euphoria gripping the stock-markets in the country. It is reminiscent of Rajiv Gandhi's early days. If Pepsi made its entry then, Coca-Cola wants in now. International giants General Motors, BMW, IBM, Kellogs, General Electric are now looking at India seriously.

Little wonder that the bulls are prancing merrily. Add the new policy that allows most companies with foreign equity to hike foreign holding to 51 per cent under the RBI's automatic approval scheme. Investors reacted fast and scrambled for FERA scrips. Looks like the era of FERA is ending.

The likelihood of a new drug policy that gives a higher return on capital has pushed up hopes for drug companies. Pharmaceutical shares were much sought after and Glaxo, Pfizer, Burroughs Wellcome, Hoechst recorded sizeable gains.

More good news: the Finance Ministry cleared the Rs 1,000-crore rehabilitation package for the Shipping Credit and Investment Company of India Ltd. Shipping shares firmed up. Corporate results were also encouraging. A study done by *The Economic Times* of 150 companies on their half yearly results showed an "upswing in earnings, despite higher interest cost". The upbeat mood reflected in the BSE index. On November 19, the index zipped up by 53 points, touching a new high of 1924.15. The national index moved in conjunction to 910.27 registering an increase of 14.02 points.



Reliance moved up by Rs 8.00 to Rs 163.00, Glaxo from Rs 191.25 to Rs 212.50, Castrol from Rs 485 to Rs 505.00, Hindustan Ciba Geigy from Rs 1975 to Rs 2225, Asian Brown Boveri from Rs 205 to Rs 327.50.

Market analysts expect a further upswing. Share broker Mahendra Kampani of Jamnadas Morarjee and Company says the BSE index will cross the 2,000 mark by February 1992. But cautions Parag Parekh of Empeegee Portfolio Management Consultants Pvt Ltd: "The new policy will have its casualties too. Monopolists are in for some tough times. Only the competitive will survive."

Meanwhile, the markets keenly await the exit policy and the Narasimhan Committee Report which, among others, is reported to have suggested reduction in reserve ratios (CRR and SLR) to 40 per cent from the current 53.5 per cent. With the optimism, it looks the bears will have to keep away for a while.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1991 HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 20.11.91	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	174.00	105.00	134.00	4.00 +
Associated Cement	3900.00	1300.00	3230.00	305.00 –
Asian Paints	325.00	215.00	300.00	7.50 –
Atlas Copco	118.75	42.00	102.50	nil
Bajaj Auto	780.00	310.00	327.50	27.50 –
Baroda Rayon	1000.00	400.00	620.00	80.00 –
Bata India	149.00	72.00	141.00	16.00 +
Ballarpur	310.00	228.00	295.00	5.00 +
Birla Jute	404.00	168.00	378.00	12.00 –
Blow Plast	210.00	40.00	130.00	22.50 +
Bombay Dyeing	405.00	150.00	393.75	38.75 +
Britannia Ind.	247.00	112.00	241.00	51.00 +
Brooke Bond	172.00	116.00	165.00	26.00 +
Cadbury India	255.00	132.50	242.50	61.25 +
Castrol India	540.00	162.50	505.00	13.75 –
Century Textiles	9050.00	3625.00	6950.00	40.00 +
Colgate Palmolive	461.25	250.00	300.00	112.50 – *
Cyanamid	220.00	76.25	210.00	47.50 +
DCM	319.50	123.00	309.50	11.50 +
Dunlop	111.00	46.50	79.00	1.00 –
E.I. Hotels	107.50	35.00	97.50	2.50 +
Escorts	172.00	127.00	142.50	19.50 –
Finolex Cables	400.00	140.00	300.00	15.00 +
Garware Nylon	44.00	27.00	32.00	3.00
G.E. Shipping	116.50	25.00	106.50	5.00 +
G.S.F.C.	341.25	150.00	315.00	17.50 –
Grasim Ind.	347.50	167.50	333.75	7.50 –
Guj. Ambuja Cement	317.50	90.00	265.00	20.00 –
Hindaclo	367.50	200.00	310.00	5.00 +
Hind. Ciba	2350.00	650.00	2225.00	300.00 +
Hindustan Lever	185.00	132.50	180.00	35.00 +
Hindustan Motors	48.50	18.80	29.50	3.50 –
Hoechst	425.00	240.00	420.00	70.00 +
ICI	38.00	30.00	86.00	9.50 +
Indian Organic	80.00	30.00	53.50	3.00 –
Indian Rayon	269.00	104.50	241.00	6.00 –
Ingersoll-Rand	385.00	240.00	380.00	15.00 +
ITC	396.00	99.00	387.00	9.00 –
J.K. Synthetics	74.00	27.00	64.00	8.50 +
Kinetic Engineering	225.00	145.00	160.00	5.00 –
Kirloskar Cummins	225.00	95.00	221.25	12.50 +
KSB Pumps	310.00	160.00	250.00	5.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	163.75	90.00	139.00	9.00 +
Lipton	205.00	57.50	190.00	10.00 +
LML Ltd.	42.50	21.00	28.00	2.00 –
M&M	115.00	57.50	76.25	6.25
Mastershares	42.50	20.00	25.50	1.00 –
Motor Industries	1950.00	675.00	1900.00	25.00 +
Mukand Ltd.	215.00	117.50	170.00	3.75 –
National Organic	1950.00	925.00	1650.00	110.00 +
Nestle India	233.00	111.25	233.00	35.00 +
Nirlon	41.25	16.00	26.00	nil
Orkay Silk Mills	40.00	17.50	33.50	0.50 –
Peico Electronics	170.00	53.00	156.00	11.00 +
Pfizer	167.50	60.00	163.75	16.25 +
Premier Auto	69.00	30.00	46.00	3.50 –
Raymond	215.00	110.00	206.25	17.25 +
Reliance Industries	206.00	91.25	163.00	4.50 –
Siemens India	255.00	112.50	232.50	2.50 –
Shaw Wallace	185.00	77.00	157.00	3.00 +
Shriram Fibres	79.00	33.00	11.00	1.00 +
SKF Bearings	3000.00	1650.00	2700.00	25.00 +
SPIC	104.00	33.00	92.00	7.50 –
Tata Steel	255.00	170.00	231.00	4.00 –
Telco	347.50	142.50	296.25	36.25 –
Titan Watches	140.00	58.00	130.00	30.00 +
Vam Organic	410.00	102.50	390.00	1.50 +
Videocon Int.	380.00	133.75	272.50	7.50 –
Voltas	145.00	92.50	127.50	nil
Wimco	57.50	16.00	56.00	8.50 +

*Ex-bonus

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	20.5391	20.3275
Austria	Shilling	100	231.6874	228.6331
Bahrain	Dinar	1	69.2598	67.3363
Bangladesh	Taka	100	70.4781	69.4208
Canada	Dollar	1	23.0152	22.7725
Denmark	Kroner	1	4.1958	4.1546
Egypt	Pound	1	8.1127	7.9110
France	Franc	1	4.8426	4.7281
Germany	DM	1	16.5563	16.1651
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	3.3587	3.3258
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.3192	1.2999
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	2.1576	2.1314
Japan	Yen	100	20.4082	19.9203
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.9258	0.9136
Kuwait	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Malaysia	Dollar	1	9.5164	9.4209
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.7043	1.6768
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6070	0.6056
Netherlands	Guilder	1	14.4716	14.3237
Pakistan	Rupee	1	1.0192	1.0055
Singapore	Dollar	1	15.6359	15.4754
Spain	Peseta	1	0.2575	0.2548
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.6165	0.6091
Sweden	Kroner	1	4.4682	4.4192
Switzerland	Franc	1	18.3845	18.1939
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1189	0.1126
Thailand	Baht	100	103.2990	100.3104
UK	Pound	1	46.7617	46.4145
USA	Dollar	1	26.0417	25.7898
UAE	Dirham	1	7.0929	7.0205
USSR	Rouble	1	29.9379	29.9356

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 20.11.91.

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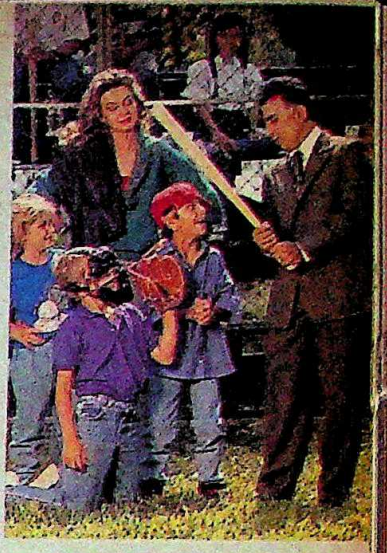

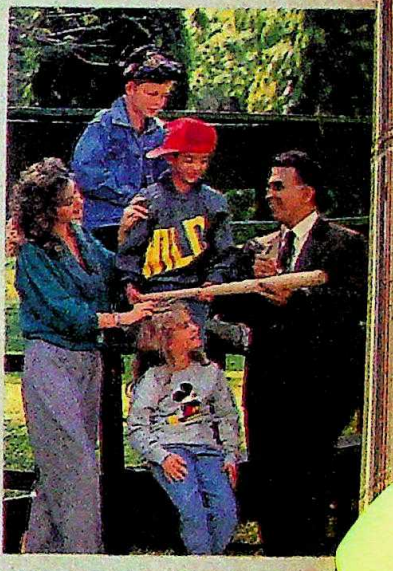

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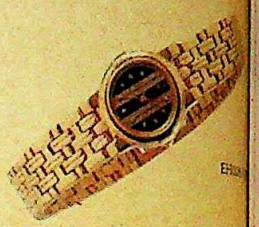
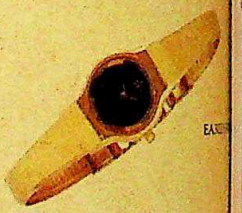
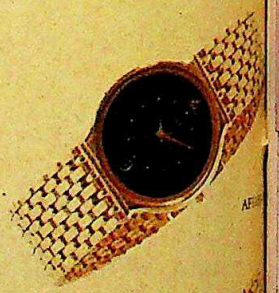
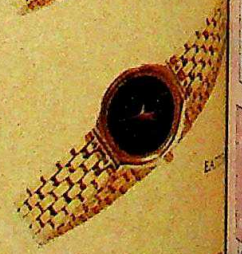
Some Faces Are Recognized All Over The World.









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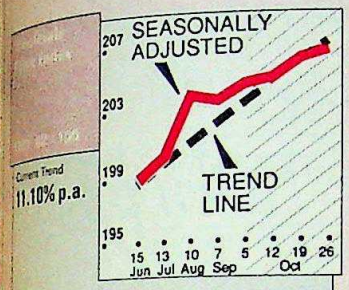
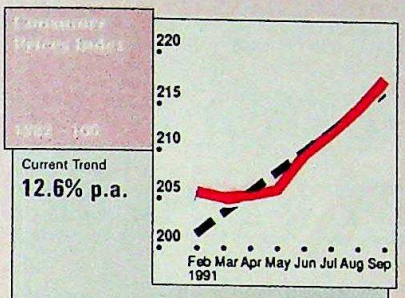
With inflation continuing to ride high, imports kept growing and the expected surge in exports didn't materialise. As a result, the foreign exchange balance continues to be precarious. While checking inflation is crucial, the Government is yet to curb its expenditure and hence money supply. So, the tight money policy could run aground.

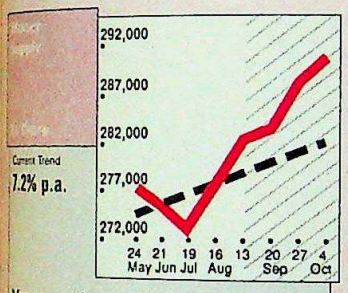
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



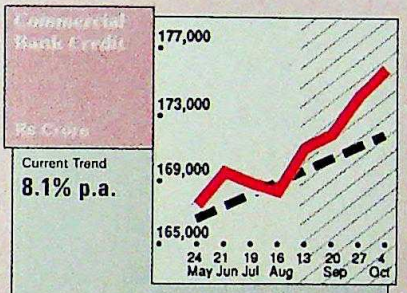
The price rise continues though at a lower rate. It is still too high and there seems to be a cost-push effect.



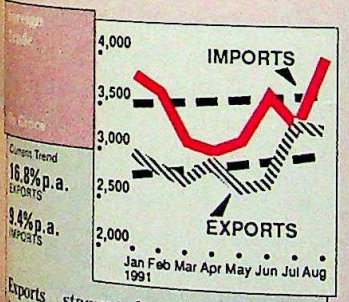
The spiral continues. Toning up the country's public distribution system is of crucial importance.



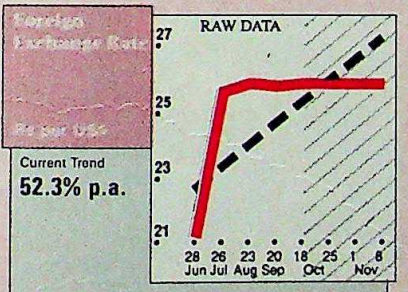
Money supply grew significantly. This is expected to drive the inflationary tendency higher.



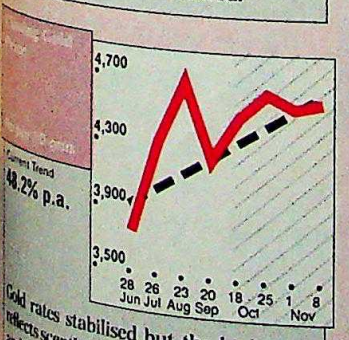
Commercial bank credit increased, though at a lower rate. Low availability of funds will depress industrial growth.



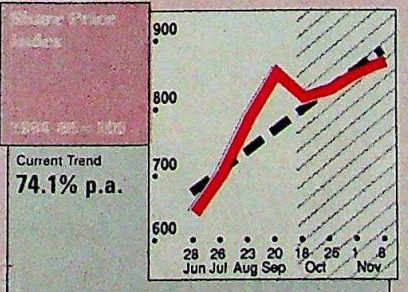
Exports stagnated, while imports leaped—this is the exact opposite of what the Government wanted.



Rupee held its own against the dollar keeping at bay reports of further depreciation in its value.



Gold rates stabilised but the high price reflects scepticism about inflation control and balance of payments management.



Share prices continue to increase reflecting bullish sentiments following liberalisation in various sectors.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of October 1991

	% Growth
Dyeing Materials	14.87
Cotton Seeds	5.63
Jowar	5.14
Maida	4.96
Copra	4.72
Milk	4.41
Coconut Oil	4.13
Gingelly Seed	3.72
Tea	3.67
Atta	3.16
Lubricating Oil	3.04
Groundnut Oilcake	3.02
Cashew-Nut	2.74
Bajra	2.53
Vanaspati	2.44
Linseed Oil	2.27
Jute Textiles	1.45
Tobacco Raw	1.44
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	1.36
Fish	0.98
Moong	0.77
Groundnut Seeds	0.71
Gingelly Oil	0.63
Ragi	0.62
Meat	0.49
Groundnut Oil	0.48
Ghee	0.47
Butter	0.37
Urad	0.37
Tyres	0.31
Dairy Products	0.27
Rice	0.23
Gur	0.22
Turmeric	0.15
Chillies	0.13
Mustard Oil	0.12
Linseed	0.10
Arhar	0.06
Nitrogenous Fertilisers	0.00
Synthetic Fibres	0.00
Phosphatic Fertilizers	0.00
Aluminium	0.00
Soda Ash	0.00
Pesticides & Insecticides	0.00
Zinc	0.00
Bulk Drugs	0.00
Matches	0.00

Of the 134 series considered, 114 of them with a total weight of 69.109 had a non-negative rate of growth and 20 of them with a total weight of 15.743 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1991	1990
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, September	15400	13800
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, September	816.4	736.9
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, September	4070	3610
Fertiliser		
Thousand Tonnes, September	770.7	796.3
Electricity		
Million KWH, September	23594	20732

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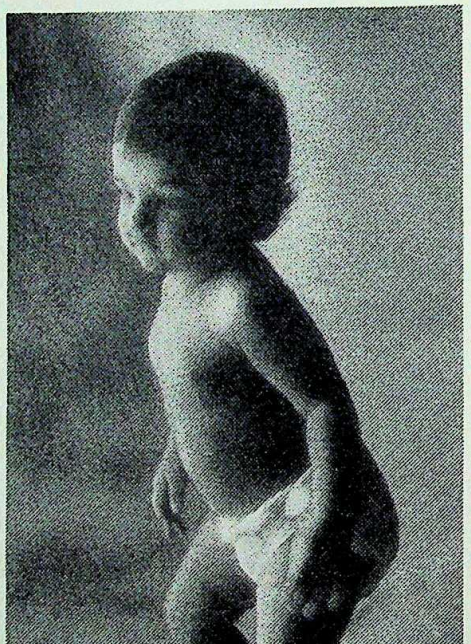

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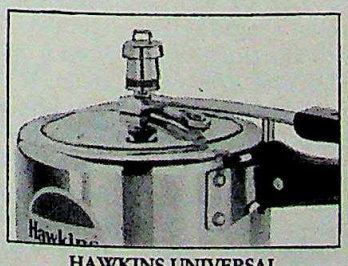

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PAKISTAN

Arabian Nights

Clergy rocked by madame's startling revelations

TILL just a few weeks ago, she was consigned to obscurity in Islamabad's salubrious outskirts. But last fortnight 33-year-old Tahira (nobody knows her second name) hit the headlines, after her startling disclosures about the not-so-kosher extra-curricular activities of a member of the clergy.

Madame Tahira, as the press named her, made amazing revelations about the nocturnal activities of the ruling elite, which were later retracted. But the Islamabad Sex Scandal exploded when Pakistani high society was still reeling from Tehmina Durrani's revelations about her feudal lord.

The central character, the ruling Islami Jumhoori Ittehad's (IJI) dissident Senator Maulana Samiul Haq, who hadn't been cited by name at the time, denied his involvement as the issue was discussed in the Senate. Ironically, Haq was one of the prime movers of the Shariat Bill. "I'm innocent. I've been framed by government agencies for opposing official policies," he shouted in the House, but later resigned from office.

However, few were outraged by the scandal in a country with a tradition of sexual indiscretion by those in power. Former chief martial law administrator general Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan rose to greater fame for his orgies. Akleem Akhtar, called General Rani—who ran the bordello which catered to Yahya Khan—had vivid tales about the general's "unique" sexual practices. The charismatic Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a playboy of sorts. But he was never charged with perverted sexual behaviour.

However, Haq's story—appropriately headlined by Pakistan's premier daily, *The News*, as 'Burning a scandal at both ends'—was different. Tahira mentioned the maulana's sexual prowess during a "sandwich session". This reportedly involved his own son-in-law and one of the madame's charming young hostesses.

Interestingly, Tahira claimed the maulana's appetite was insatiable during the debate before the passage of the Shariat Bill. Ironically, the legislation prescribes "exemplary" penalties for sinners. Tahira had also cited many politicians and top government officers. Among those using coded phone calls to have escorts dropped off at their residence were a minister, and another maulana—who led the anti-Salman Rushdie campaign.

Ironically, Haq, who has been attacked for sexual peccadilloes, was the prime mover of the Shariat Bill.

AP/PTI

Tahira (above); and Haq: dangerous liaisons

Tahira apparently has several rolls of negatives with government functionaries caught in action. As an IJI member said, the maulana was not lambasted for just having sinned, but for getting caught at a time when the Government was reeling in the aftermath of the cooperatives collapse and the loan scandals. The sex scandal could have been a chance for the administration to divert attention away from opposition attack.

This is the argument of those who say the highest in the land has got away unscathed with his affairs. The reference is to the one who's said to have been overheard singing Kishore Kumar's *Aisay na mujhay tum dekho to* a socialite from across the border.

—ABBAS NASIR in Karachi

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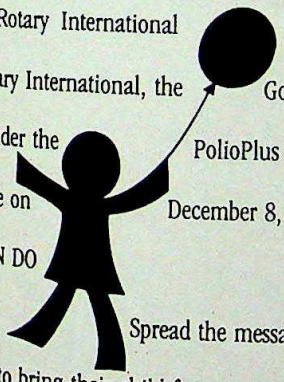
Rotary International, the Government of India, WHO, and UNICEF are conducting an intensive Free Polio Immunisation programme under the PolioPlus campaign. The first such day was on October 6, the next one on November 10, followed by one on December 8, for follow-up.



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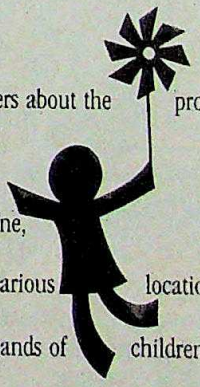

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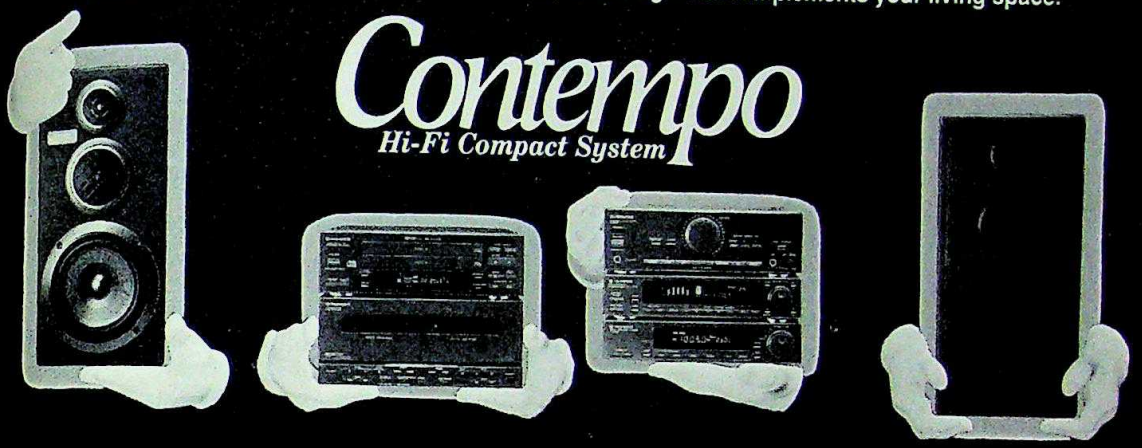

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** X-P55/X-P55M (305W PMPO), X-P33 (210W PMPO) and X-P11 (200W PMPO) Contempo models are also available.*

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BOMBAY

Blazing Saddles

Shoot-out gives the city's underworld a bloody nose

Indian Express

Killed criminals: dire warning

UNTIL recently, the only gunfights residents of the upper middle class Lokhandwala colony in Andheri, a Bombay suburb, had witnessed were on television. But last fortnight, the crackle of gunfire came not from the screens but from outside.

And it continued for the next four hours. In one of Bombay's bloodiest police-underworld encounters, over 500 policemen took part in the operation. It left seven hoodlums who worked for Dubai-based don Dawood Ibrahim dead. Among them were two contract killers, Maya Dolas and Dilip Buwa. Seven policemen were injured. Weapons, including two AK-47s, were also recovered. "Though the Bombay police have been fighting the gangs for the past one year, this operation has had a visible impact. I'm going to hammer home the message that the 'D' Company (the popular nickname for Dawood's gang) is not invincible," said Police Commissioner S. Ramamurthy.

Both Dolas, 24, and Buwa, 28, were high on the police wanted list. When Aftab Ahmed Khan, the additional commissioner for north Bombay, got a tip-off that Dolas and Buwa were in a Lokhandwala colony flat, he quickly mobilised his anti-terrorist squad. Khan's men launched a sustained attack on the hoodlums who tried escaping, finally killing Dolas and Buwa.

Khan immediately became a local hero in a town reeling under a spate of kidnappings and murder. All those killed were shortly to set off on a kidnapping mission involving builders. Dawood's gang is by far the dominant force in Bombay's underworld. Police sources estimate its smuggling and hawala rackets turnover at Rs 200 crore. The Dubai don has also had a long-standing rivalry with Arun Gawli's gang. But this year the police have recorded only five cases of inter-gang gunfights, against 25 cases last year, indicating that constant police harassment has made an impact.

Nevertheless, the extortion racket has become a growing menace. Though the Lokhandwala shoot-out is unlikely to affect Dawood's smuggling operations, it will ensure that gangsters employed by him and smaller underworld figures do not indulge in kidnapping and extortion. "The next time a businessman gets a call from some hoodlum from the 'D' Company, we hope he won't give in, but come to us instead," said a senior police officer.

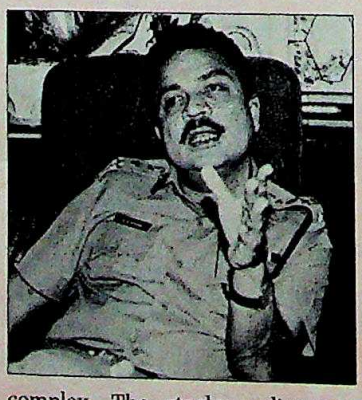
Meanwhile, the Bombay police are driving the advantage home by launching a few more surgical strikes against armed gangs. —M. RAHMAN

AFTAB AHMED KHAN

Top Gun

THE front-page picture said it all. At the head of a slain gangster, his handgun sticking out from under an unbuttoned bush-shirt, stood Aftab Ahmed Khan, 50, additional commissioner of police, north Bombay.

The Lokhandwala operation was vintage Khan—the officer known for leading from the front. After getting the go-ahead from Police Commissioner S. Ramamurthy, Khan and his squad surrounded the complex. The stocky policeman, who took over last October, first made news in January this year when he and the anti-terrorist squad killed four Sikh terrorists at a Baroda hide-out. Later, Khan's squad raided the headquarters of Arun Gawli's gang, Dawood Ibrahim's rival, picking up six gangsters.



Khan: midnight cowboy

Khan has been under fire for not picking up any prisoners after the Lokhandwala shootout. Says he: "What could we do? They greeted us with gunfire, two of my officers were hit." But now, he says, people are volunteering information on the underworld. If Khan—the 'policeman's police-officer'—has his way, other gangsters will also be staring at the wrong end of a gun. —M. RAHMAN

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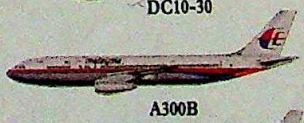

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(NASA, KINDLY NOTE)

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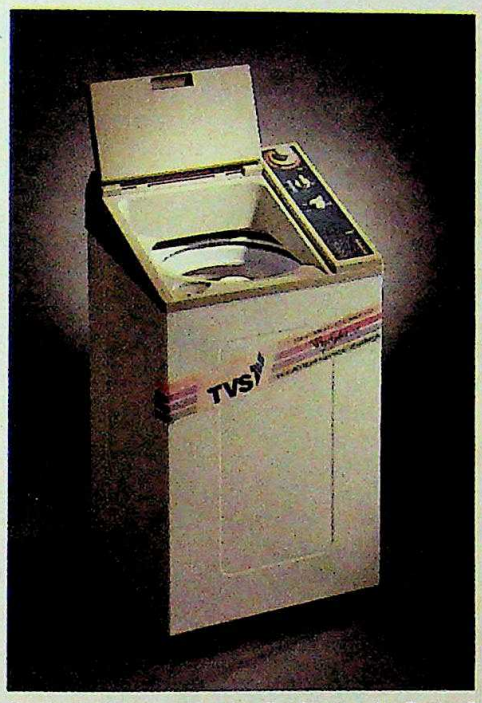

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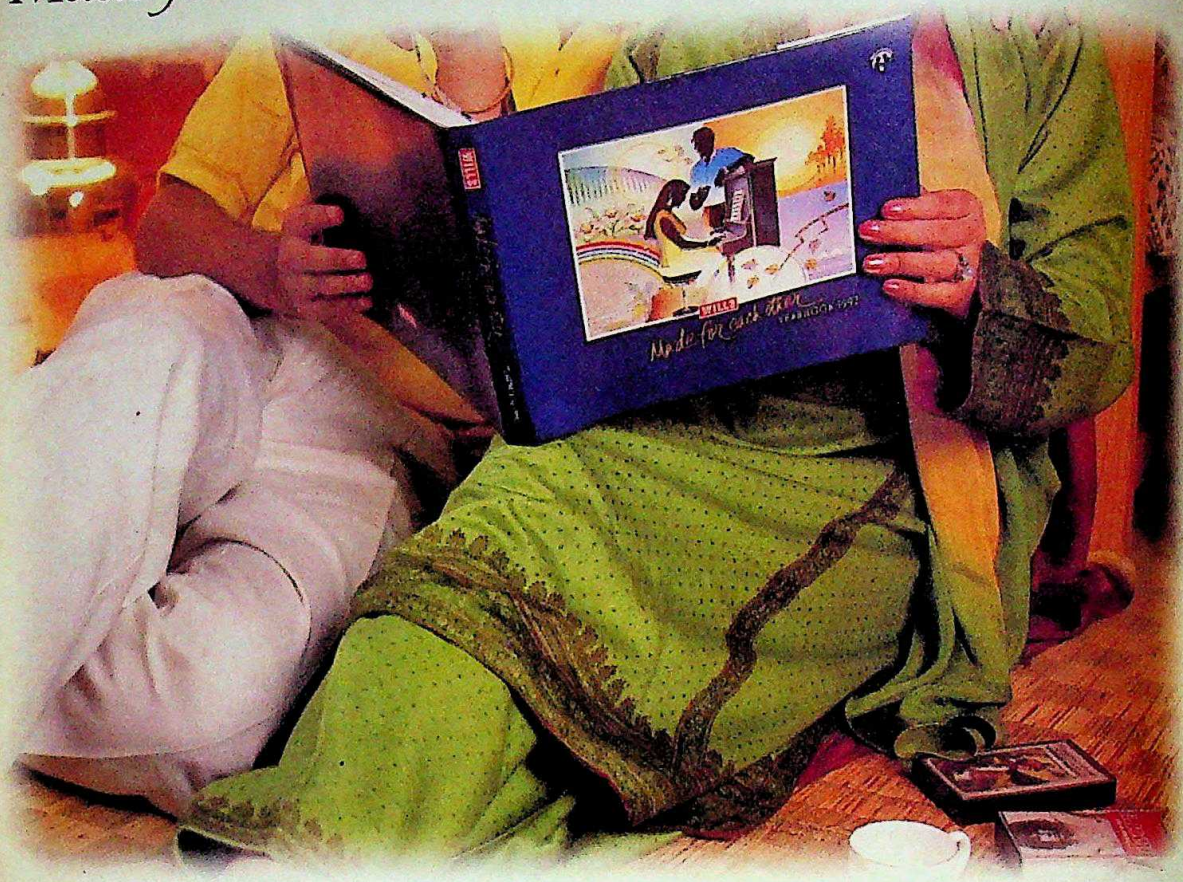
'Made for each other' moments... captured in music



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'QUESTIES'

Rapidly Seeking English

Determined to speak as well as the 'puppie' next door, thousands of Indians across the country are joining quick-fix English-language courses

By RAHUL PATHAK and VIJAY KRANTI

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA

A halting, stuttering, stumbling revolution is upon us. A learn-by-night, practice-by-day revolution that is sweeping newly-gentrified colonies and low income group flats. Around two crore Indians with a single quest. To speak English as well as the 'puppie' next-door.

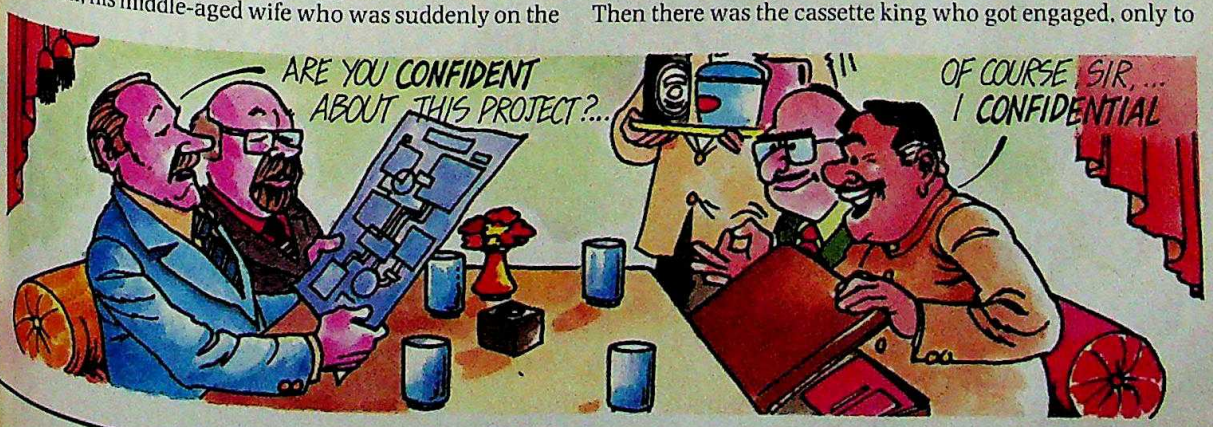
It is a determined pursuit and an embarrassed one. A secret malady that demands a confidential cure. But a prayer has been answered and sympathetic purveyors of the language have sprung up in every dark alley. "Pssst, want some English?" they whisper. For a consideration of course.

The business of teaching 'convent-level' English has come a long way since the Rapidex revolutionary, Ram Avtar Gupta *(see box)*, stumbled upon a latent note bank—millions of his countrymen, educated but aspiring higher, who were convinced that they could not really 'arrive' without an *angrezi* stamp. The property-dealer who had run into wealth, his middle-aged wife who was suddenly on the party-circuit, the graduate who needed a job, the young man who wanted to ape his celluloid hero and that demure young lady about to get married—the list is endless. The Quick English Speaking Type (QUESTY) has snatched at promises of a *farratedar* future eagerly and furtively, the way most Indians buy contraceptives.

At the crack of dawn or late in the evening, when there is no traffic on the road, the Questy has been trooping to 'Inglis Ispeaking Korsij' around the country. Going by the most conservative estimates, there are over 150 such institutes in Delhi alone, which offer one-to-four-month quick-fix courses after which you will ostensibly talk David Frost under the table. At any given time, there are about 25,000 hopefuls in the city, trying to achieve precisely that golden dream.

They come from everywhere. K.P. Singh Bedi, proprietor of the British School of Languages, with six branches and over 2,000 students under his belt, can vouch for the fact that an ability to speak English is the ultimate status symbol, while a lack of it is the sharpest secret sorrow. And this is especially true in the most rarified of social circles that people give their right arms to break into. Only to find they don't have the right anglicised accent.

Bedi has four members of Parliament and a gaggle of ministerial spouses on his rolls. Once, he says, he was invited to teach the man who held the highest office in the land. Then there was the cassette king who got engaged, only to



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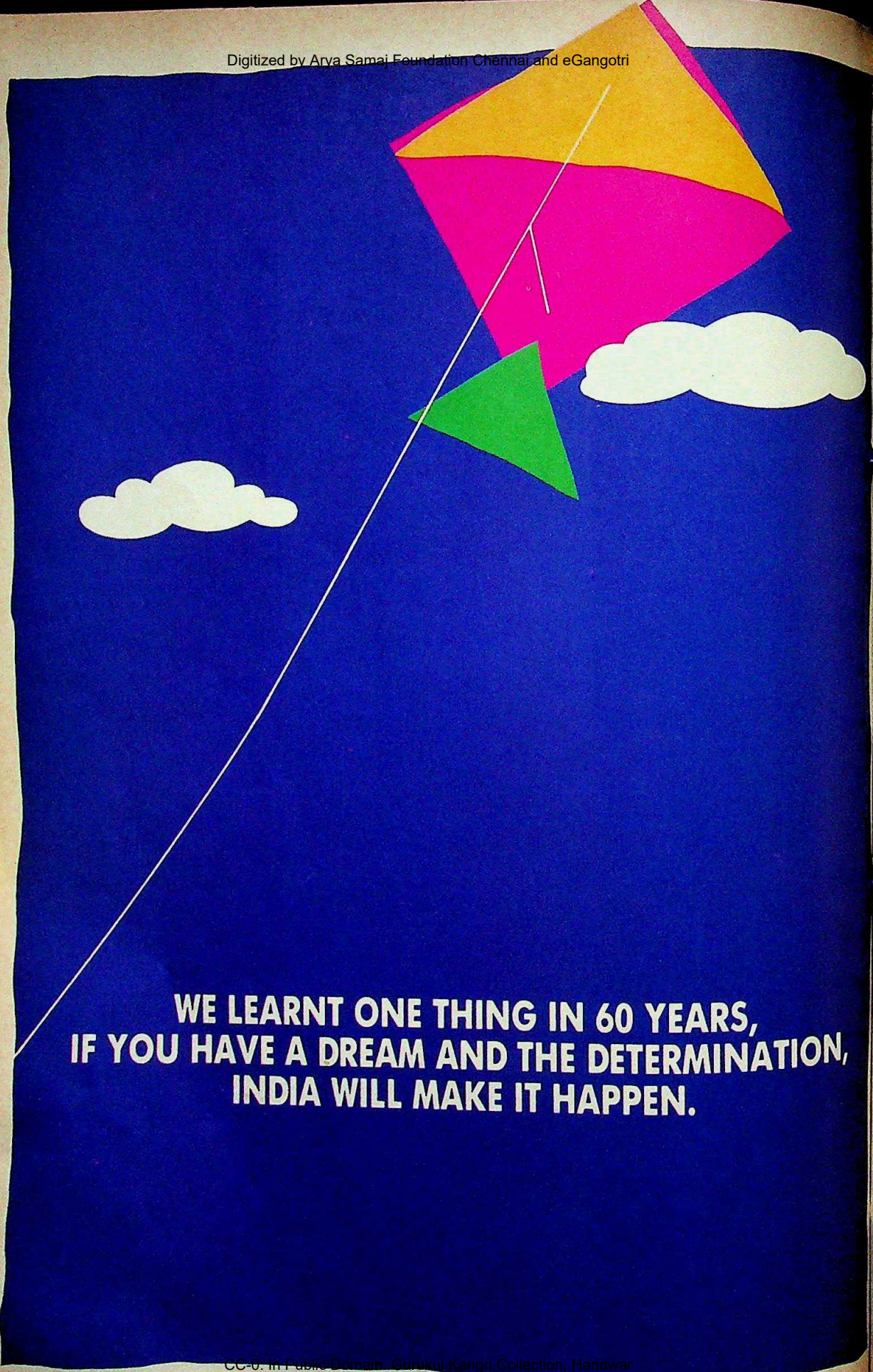

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India can.

Look up at the galaxy of international achievers, and you'll see stars born in India. Luminaries who have taken science, philosophy, art and literature to new heights. Like the kite soaring with the excitement of climbing higher and higher. Because it believes it can fly through every challenge. Just like India can. India has a wealth of intellectual capital which the world recognizes, and which we must use to the fullest. And, at Hindustan Lever, we have.

India did.

As the kite goes higher and higher, it realizes its own potential. And surges ahead. It knows that someone holds the string that gives its flight direction. Hands that are capable and determined. Today, India's future lies in the hands of very competent people. Over the last 60 years, India has proved her capabilities in the technological and agricultural fields. The list of her innovations is long and varied. But success has not made her complacent. India has never stopped learning. Each day is the start of a new quest. To get better. To excel. At Hindustan Lever, we would like to celebrate our diamond jubilee by saluting the achievements of India's visionaries. Who have helped her soar ahead.

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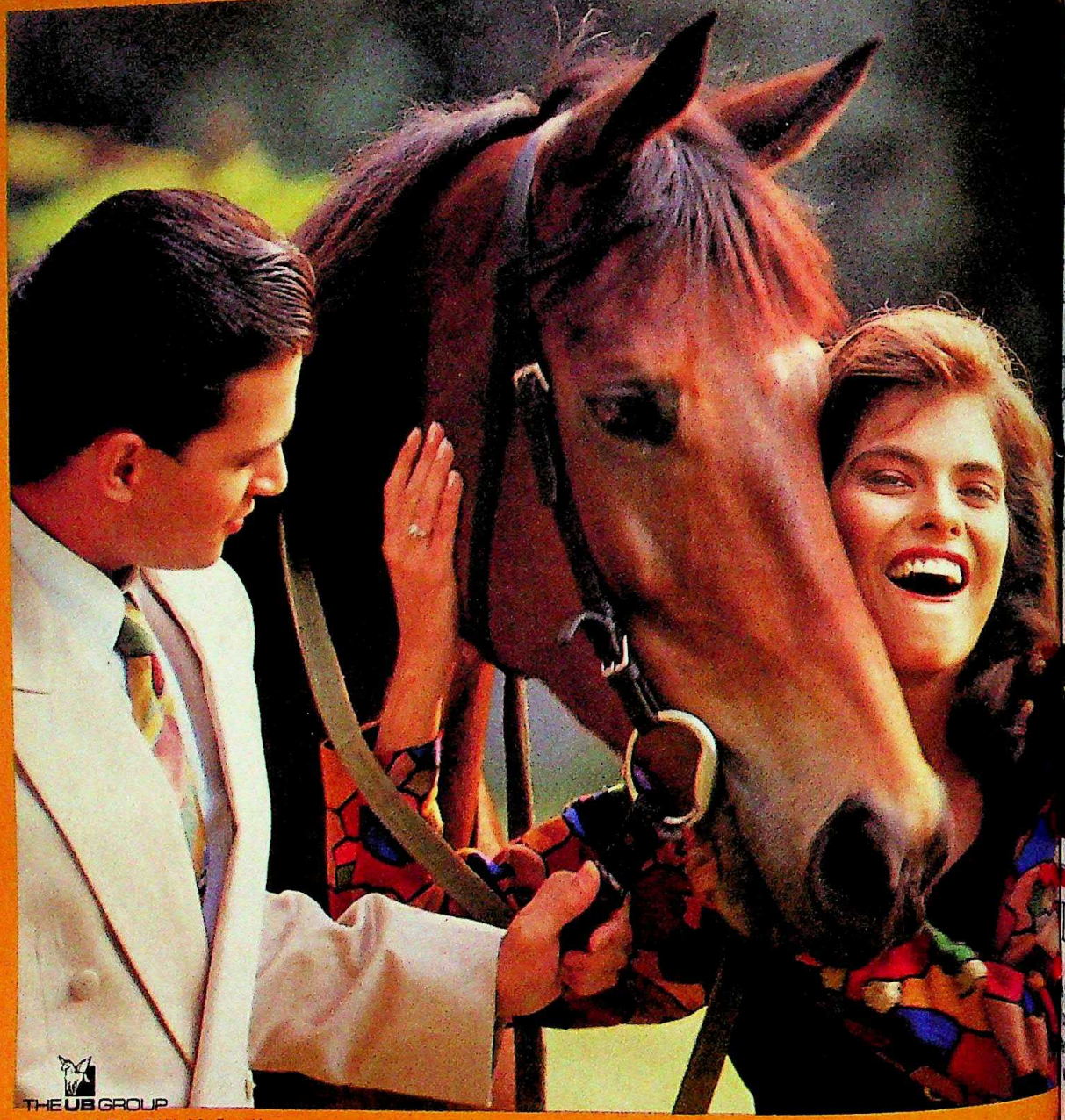

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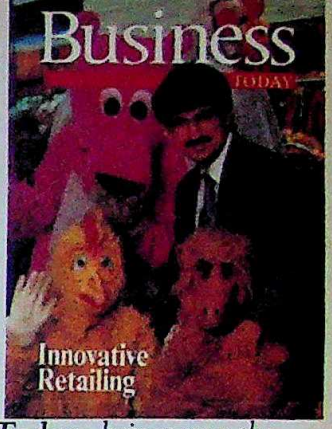

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AN INDIA TODAY PUBLICATION

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find that his *phoren*-crazy fiancee wanted an *angrezi* crest over his *desi*-acquired wealth.

The unanglicised rich have big problems. A Puppan's husband made it big and the lady decided to join a health club. She could afford it, and in any case she no longer had too much to do with her friends of yore. Then, in her brand-new leotards, the lady discovered that she just could not follow what the instructor was saying. She became a Questy.

Bedi has been smart enough to realise that different students have different needs. A businessman who wants to impress a *'bahar ki* party' requires one course, while the college kid who has suddenly decided to find out what his lecturer has been droning about all these days, needs another. The one-to-two-month course can cost between Rs 500 for the beginner and a steep Rs 3,000 for—hold your breath—teachers!

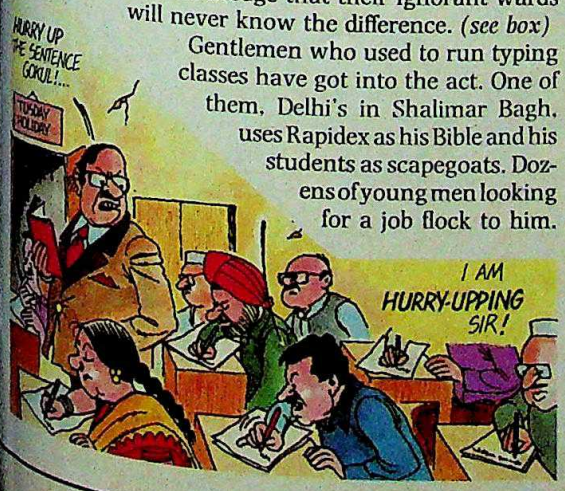
There is a clutch of young people who first secured teaching jobs and then decided to learn some English. One of them works for a prestigious public school, something he never attended himself. When he found Class VIII students out-talking him, something snapped. Now he is learning English from a part-time teacher who is actually a student at the upmarket Miranda House.

IN 15 years of teaching people how to speak English, Bedi has learnt to talk on the subject fluently. The problem, he says, is that English is taught throughout the country as a subject and not as a language. People pass tests in it, but—or probably because of that—cannot speak it. Until they realise they cannot ignore it. It is a pre-requisite for jobs, as well as a status symbol. One of Bedi's teachers mars the impact of his discourse, somewhat, when she avers: "Status quo *to hai.*"

And so the Questy flock grows. By definition, almost, they are ashamed of their quest—until they have achieved it. They don't want to be seen striving for something that has been branded upmarket, lest they be seen as downmarket themselves. In fact, one institute had to discontinue printing a picture of two schoolchildren chattering away—presumably in English—on the cover of their workbook. The Questies used to tear it off.

An institute has come up in almost every locality to meet the demand. But when it comes to the package, it is a sellers' market. There is usually just one, uniform four-month course (fees Rs 400-800) and all the students have to adapt their individual needs to it. The institutes, in most cases, are run by fast-talking, grammar-twisting, money-making maestros, who are safe in the knowledge that their ignorant wards will never know the difference. *(see box)*

Gentlemen who used to run typing classes have got into the act. One of them, Delhi's in Shalimar Bagh, uses Rapidex as his Bible and his students as scapegoats. Dozens of young men looking for a job flock to him.



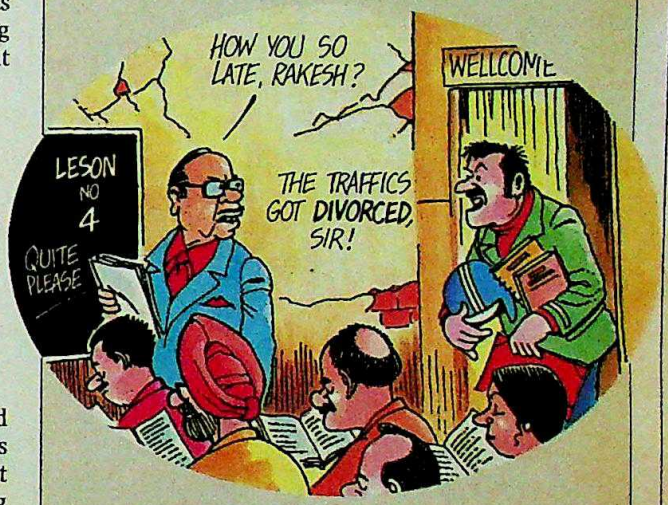
MY FIRST LESSON

'Farratedar' Finish

THE other day, I decided to learn some English. Notebook in hand, I marched up the narrow staircase next to a *halwai's* establishment in Laxmi Nagar in Delhi. The grey building, brightened by a dozen hoardings, offers you houses on sale and several courses to improve your prospects in life. All, courtesy the same benevolent soul.

The proprietor promptly forgets his Hindi when I tell him I want to learn English. "Brother," he says amidst the clatter of typewriters, "I am giving full amfull giranty. *Nahin to* refund *waapis.*" For Rs 100 a month, he says, I'll speak like a 'kanwentwallah'.

The high priest of this temple of learning gives me



the prospectus. It says: "This course is helpful because it assure you sure success in examination and it fill in your confidence. Thereby you do not feel embarrassed at parties where English is spoken very often." Obviously, if you can't see through that, he's got you.

The classroom is a spacious eight feet by ten. Twenty hopefuls, most of them women, squeeze inside. The lessons follow a carefully researched pattern in which the teacher dictates Hindi sentences to his students. The next morning they are expected to produce English translations, which the patient pedagogue rips apart. And a language is conquered.

A student is asked to inquire whether a particular house is available on rent. "Is this late house?" asks the boy. Silence, until the teacher shakes his head. Then the class bursts into laughter. Questies are a snobbish lot. Their colleague can't speak English!

Wearily, the teacher explains. "*Nahin bete nahin.* The answer is : Is this house to late (let!)." Hushed silence and admiring looks that stop just short of applause. The man is pleased, but not enough. He looks reproachfully at the prettiest girl in the class and says: "Rita, Rita, you are not paying the attention."

The class ends. But the Questies avoid each other, in spite of their common yearning: "If only I could speak as fluently as this master." —RAHUL PATHAK

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HOW DID WE CAPTURE A MAJOR SHARE
OF THE AGRO-CHEMICALS MARKET?
WELL, THE INSPIRATION CAME FROM ABOVE

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Saint Peter's Cathedral, Rome, is a bedrock example of how well a firm foundation can stand up to the vicissitudes of time. We believe there's much to learn from this when you're in the process of setting up a new enterprise.

The extent to which you're committed to a venture often determines the strength of its foundation.

Our own experiences seem to testify to this.

A particular variety of wheat in Punjab was prone to repeated attacks by a menacing weed. And the one effective weedicide that could combat this, Isoproturon, was in extremely short supply.

Having identified this as an opportunity area, we decided to enter the agro-chemical market.

Wherein we came upon the first stumbling block.

One of the raw materials required to manufacture Isoproturon was Phosgene. (A chemical which had an active role to play in the Bhopal tragedy.) Quite obviously, we could not proceed until we found a more acceptable alternative.

An extensive search revealed that a substitute did exist. Only it was in extremely short supply the world over.

Stumbling block number two.

Disappointed but not deterred, we went on to scour the remote corners of the world. This time the efforts paid off.

A Japanese manufacturer produced 100 tonnes of this precious raw material every year.

If we were committed to a long term view, we clearly had to establish a regular, reliable source of this material.

So we made a commitment to purchase a major chunk of the Japanese manufacturer's production. In fact, as time went by and our needs grew, we encouraged him to develop and increase his capacity.

Today, we're still his largest buyer.

And not only have we cornered a major share of the Isoproturon market in India, we also export it to an increasing number of countries.

Evidently, a strong foundation is worth the trouble.

YOU CAN'T BUILD A STRONG BUSINESS WITHOUT A STRONG FOUNDATION.

MONTARI

(A Bhai Mohan Singh Group Company)

Trikaya Grey M.2.91

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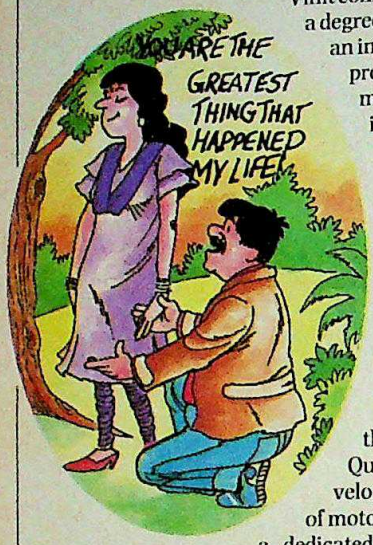
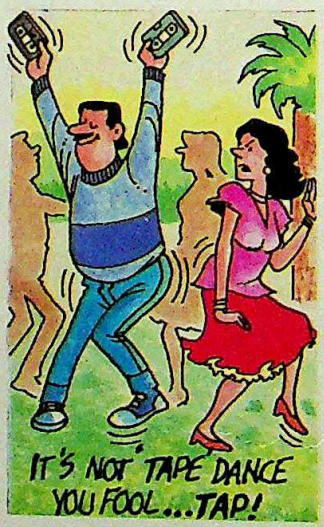
The man has an advantage. He is south Indian. "*In Madrasiyon se achhi angrezi koi nahin bol sakta*" (No one can speak better English than these Tamilians), asserts his awestruck pupil, Vinit Goel.



Vinit comes from Meerut and has a degree minus English. He has an influential uncle who has promised him a job the moment he learns how to impress a 'party' in a foreign tongue. "I only have to do this once. My uncle has told me that once the party is impressed, we can go back to speaking in Punjabi or Hindi."

But between a young hopeful like Vinit and the former first man of India, lies the entire gamut that the Questy movement has enveloped. Chawla, purveyor of motor-parts to the army and a dedicated Questy, was literally forced into the revolution. He could sweet-talk havildars in fluent Punjabi and sell his parts with an ounce of bribe. Then the commissioned officers got wise to the game. "They are *ustads*. You can't *patao* them without some fast English," says Chawla. He also swears that until he joined the course, he thought commissioned officers were those who had been authorised by the *sarkar* to take commissions on deals.



Mrs Bhalla claims she is learning the language on behalf of her husband. "*Unhe sharam aati hai*" (He is embarrassed about coming here), she says demurely. So she learns by day and teaches him at night. She is quite proud of the progress he has made. Just ask him his name, she says. We do. He tells us loudly "Myself Rajesh Bhalla". Of course, he will tell you this, even if you don't ask him.

The movement has even sliced the age barrier. A 65-year-old woman came determined to learn English because she could not unveil the little conspiracies her grandchildren hatched right under her nose. Four months later, all the English words that she had been hearing for years came together and the kids got the shock of their young lives.

Even the marriage bazaar is not proof against the winds of change. Sarita is cramming with a vengeance. "*Nahin to iske woh* will not bring *baraat* ", her friend explains.

The business grows. The revolution spreads. The Questy reaches out for the Holy Grail. He mutters the mantra of his masters: "I will grab it, believe you me." ■

SHIPRA DAS

RAM AVTAR GUPTA

Language Lord

YOU see it here, you see it there. At news stands in Connaught Place and pan shops in Madras. The album-sized tome, in glazed newsprint, occupies the pride of place on the top of the shelf. And not without reason. For, the Rs 45 Rapidex English Speaking Course (RESC) has made publishing history, with its combined sales in 14 languages having crossed the magical and much-sought-after figure of one crore copies.

Ram Avtar Gupta, the man behind the runaway success of Rapidex, realised pretty early in life that the books that sold most easily in his father's shop had titles like *Dus Rupaye Mein Matric Pass*. He knew he was on to a saleable proposition when RESC ran into three print orders in its very first year.

Gupta has always managed to stay two paces ahead of the competition snapping at his heels, by keeping one eye trained on the consumer's pocket and another on his need. He has improvised constantly and rapidly, adding chapters on model conversations as also letter writing. Apparently, he has even hired a crack team of strategists to caution and advise the potential Questy.

For example, Gupta boldly tells his romantically-inclined readers how to launch a love campaign. "Start your letter with words of love," he advises, and gives you a lusty line for the cute kick-off. "Your sweet letter," he says, "has sunken me in the sweet fragrance of our love."

He tells the landlord to seek a rent-hike from the tenant with the words: "I feel constrained to inform you that due to the recent increase in house-tax I have been left with no alternative but to increase the house rent." But he is fair. He also advises the tenant to parry such a letter with "I regret to write that my financial means don't permit me to pay higher rent."

Sometimes, of course, Gupta gets too carried away. He tells you how to converse with a railway coolie in English, on the sanguine assumption that the coolie is a Rapidex reader.

—VIJAY KRANTI

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For the last three years the computer industry's severest critics have been giving it to us.

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They judged TVSE Dot Matrix Printers winners of the PC Quest Best Indian Product Award for the third year in succession.

In fact, the professional preference for TVSE is so overwhelming, it has inspired PC Quest to conclude "... TVSE's lead proves that there is no number two."

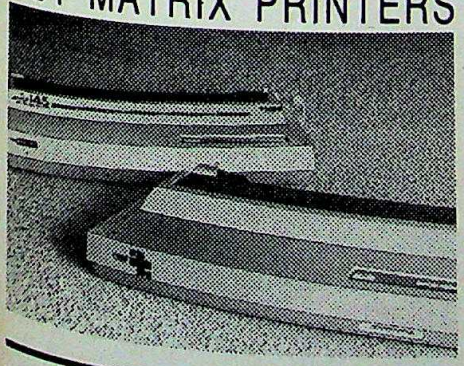
To us, it means more than just that. It represents the market's appreciation of our efforts to constantly upgrade our products. Their faith in our R&D. And the strong support they enjoy from our nation-wide service network.

Above all, it inspires us to continue doing what TVSE is reputed for : taking the lead by keeping our customers ahead.

TVSE

TVS ELECTRONICS

DOT MATRIX PRINTERS



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DECISION

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• **Jürgen Backhaus** (Rijksuniversiteit Limburg, The Netherlands)	: Privatization & Nationalization— A Suggested Approach
• **Prajapati Trivedi** (IIM Calcutta)	: Comparative Efficiency of Public & Private Enterprises : Further Evidence
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• **Franco Reviglio** (ENI Group, Rome, Italy)	: State Holdings in Italy—A Lesson From Theory & Experience
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DECISION IS THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF I I M CALCUTTA WHICH IS INDIA'S LEADING MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Subscription : Annual — Rs. 100.00 (Institutions)
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SAEED JAFFREY

Avatars Extraordinary

The ebullient and versatile actor is suddenly in great demand, and is garnering acclaim across Europe, America and Asia.

By M. RAHMAN

HE is not everybody's idea of an international star. Short-statured, paunchy and heavy jowled, his thick moustache barely conceals a perennially impish expression. But actor Saeed Jaffrey is a virtual one-man international entertainment industry, appearing in highly-acclaimed plays, films, television productions and radio programmes across three continents.

Last fortnight, for instance, as the spotlight turned on him at the Canadian Film Academy Awards in Toronto for his brilliant performance in expatriate film maker Srinivas Krishna's zany comedy *Masala*, he was also shooting for K. Balachandra's romance *Dilon ka Rishta* in Kerala, looking at the script for Adam Clapham's *Mogli, the Jungle Boy* to be shot in Sri Lanka, recounting his performance as an Indian novelist in the Channel 4 film *Walk of Life* co-starring Hayley Mills, and awaiting the London release of the album, *The Art of Love*, based on the Kamasutra.

Jaffrey's prolific talent earned him a mention in the latest edition of Debrett's, the first Indian actor to be featured in the snobbish Who's Who of British film society. It is a well-deserved honour. For, during four decades as an entertainer, the ebullient star has used a talent at mimicking to re-create a plethora of characters. For the National Theatre production of Christopher Hampton's new play, *White Chameleon*, he brushed up his Arabic, learned how to iron, pluck quails and wash dishes to dazzle London audiences with his performance as an Egyptian serving a British family during the Suez crisis.

The other remarkable quality about Jaffrey is his readiness to accept new challenges, often agreeing to

Jaffrey's versatility which earned him a place in the Who's Who of British cinema is evident in *Masala* in which he plays three roles.

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"We got lost in the 15th century.

▶ ACCESSIBILITY : Nearest airport Indore (97 kms). Convenient railheads Indore and Ratlam (124 kms). Regular bus services. ▶ BEST SEASON : July-March
▶ ACCOMMODATION : MP Tourism offers a choice of Tourist Cottages and a Travellers Lodge.

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And found each other."

Naturally, all honeymoons, are unforgettable. But ours was legendary!
Dinner by starlight. Music by the balladeers of Malwa. And keeping us company,
the spirit of the dashing poet-prince Baz Bahadur and his gorgeous consort Rani Roopmati.
And slowly, as we got lost in the magic of Mandu, we discovered each other.
Enclosed from the outside world by a 45-km parapet of walls, we drifted in a world of
pavilions, palaces and lakes, that once made Mandu the pleasure resort of Emperors.
Of course, we had all the 20th century comforts in the MP Tourism cottage where we stayed.
And to think it's just four hours from Bombay!
A direct flight to Indore, and then 100 kms by road. And yet so secluded.
Now when my friends say, 'Mandu, where's that?' I simply reply, 'In my heart'.

- UJJAIN
- INDORE
- **Mandu**
- MAHESHWAR
- OMKARESHWAR

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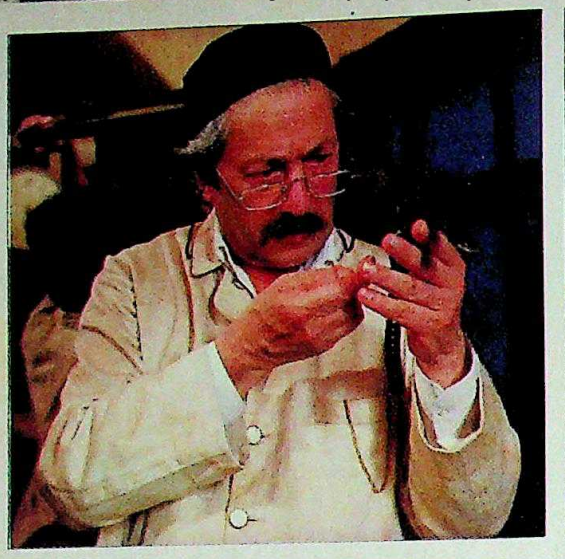

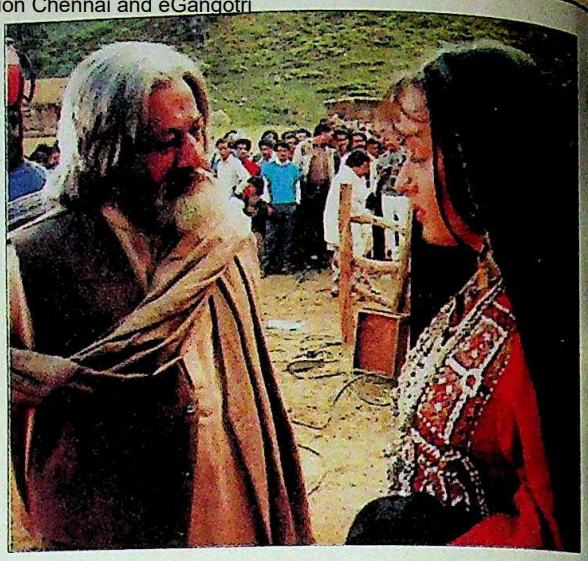

During four decades as an entertainer on radio, in theatre, television and cinema, Jaffrey has assayed a staggering variety of roles.

work for young expatriates in the West if the script shows potential. This was how he landed his highly-praised role in the Hanif Kureshi-written *My Beautiful Laundrette*. And in *Masala*, Jaffrey takes on three roles—the pushy sari merchant Lallubhai, a meek stamp collector Mr Tikoo who stumbles on a rare 1867 stamp, and Lord Krishna.

JAFFREY'S painstaking approach to his profession often pays dividends. Again this year, he agreed to play the role of a lonely epileptic in *A View from the Window*, a short diploma film by young British film maker Suri Krishnamma. To make the performance authentic, the actor pored over a medical treatise listing the various types of epileptic fits. His moving portrayal got the film a nomination from the British Academy of Film and Television Artistes after it was screened on BBC-TV. "I try to make any character I play so authentic that no one should be able to imagine anyone but an Indian actor in that role," asserts Jaffrey.

It is difficult to imagine Jaffrey as anything but an actor. But he was also a promising cartoonist, and only when *Shankar's Weekly* refused to hire him did he join All India Radio in Delhi in 1951 after getting his M.A.(History) from Allahabad University. A Fulbright fellowship took him to the US five years later, and with the decision to stay on in New York came marriage to Madhur, his colleague from Delhi's amateur stage.

Soon the Indian actor made a mark with the programme *Reflections on India* for the New York Times radio station and followed it with the role of E.M. Forster's Professor Godbole on Broadway. He hasn't looked back since. *Jewel in the Crown*, *Staying On*, Channel 4's popular *Tandoori Nights*, the BBC-TV cult classic *Gangsters*, *Far Pavilions*, John Frankenheimer's *The Horseman*, John Huston's *The Man Who Would Be King*: the list is endless.

But the shift from New York to London also meant a divorce from Madhur, and separation from his three daughters. For the past 17 years, the Indian actor has been with Jennifer, who has now become a casting director. Jaffrey's return to India as an actor began with Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj ke Khilari* in 1977. This was followed by Sai Paranjpe's *Chashme Buddoor*, and nearly 50 other Bombay films.

The actor himself has to often answer the question: What are you doing in Bombay when you're established in London? Jaffrey explains: "It's not for the money. Even for a small film like *Masala*, I earn more than what many heroes get here. It's for the beggar praising my acting, the young fan writing to tell me I'm his best friend."

But Jaffrey had to constantly prove himself to overcome the disadvantages of being an emigrant from India. "You had to accept any challenge thrown at you, and make it so resoundingly successful that it would open other closed doors," recalls the actor. Along the way, there was tension, particularly during racist attacks on him, in Britain during the '70s.

Now he plans to write his memoirs and direct his first film, based on novelist Balraj Khanna's *Sweet Chillies*. "I want to capture the special quality of Punjab before terrorism started destroying it," says Jaffrey. The actor's mother was from Punjab, and the film will mark another return to roots for him. ■

THE HITS: CRITICAL AND COMMERCIAL

Henna: An endearing pathan in Raj Kapoor's dream project.

Masala: Three roles in a wacky comedy about Indian emigres.

My Beautiful Laundrette: Cynical businessman in a Frears' film.

Ram Teri Ganga Maili: Hero's uncle in Raj Kapoor's block-buster.

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Gandhi: Sardar Patel in Attenborough's Oscar-winner.

Staying On: Memorable in the film based on Paul Scott's novel.

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HMV KHAZANA

SENTIMENTAL MOHD. RAFI

◄SINGLE CASSETTE►

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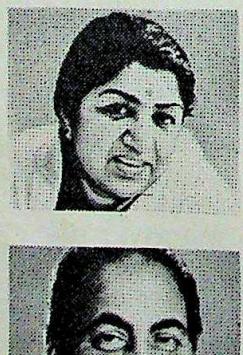
Walk down memory lane. Listen to some truly vintage hits rendered by G. M. Durrani in this cassette that features 16 songs like "Dil Ke Pat Khol Ke Dekho", "Aye Chand Bata Mujh Ko", "Haath Seene Pe Jo Rakh Do" and many more.

THE GOLDEN COLLECTION ASHA BHOSLE

◄4 CASSETTE PACK►

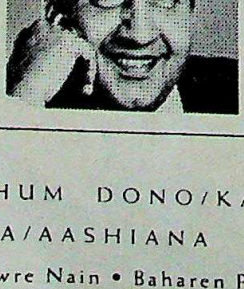
"Jab Chali Thandi Hawa", "Jhumka Gira Re", "Dum Maro Dum", "Dil Cheez Kya Hai" till the more recent "Mera Kuchh Saaman" This Golden Collection pack which includes 50 songs is the most eloquent testimony to the talent of one of the most versatile female playback singers of all times. A must-buy for all lovers of Asha Bhosle's music.

THE GOLDEN COLLECTION LATA MANGESHKAR/MOHD. RAFI



◄4 CASSETTE PACK►

"Sau Saal Pahle", "Yeh Dil Tum Bin Lagta Nahin", "Mujhe Teri Mohabbat Ka", "Teri Bindiya Re" and of course "Chalo Dildar Chalo". This Golden Collection pack includes 50 evergreen duets rendered in the voices of one of the most melodious duos of all times-Lata Mangeshkar and Mohd. Rafi. This pack is a treat to the ears.



GREAT HIT DUETS ASHA BHOSLE KISHORE KUMAR

◄SINGLE CASSETTE►

"Ek Main Aur Ek Too", "Le Jayenge Le Jayenge", "Intaha Ho Gai Intezar Ki". This cassette features 9 recent hit duets rendered by the duo Asha Bhosle and Kishore Kumar.

WATCH OUT!

Sajda

A double-cassette offering of 16 unbelievable ghazals from Lata Mangeshkar and Jagjit Singh is releasing mid-December.

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ANSWERING MACHINES

Twist 'n' Tease

Fun talk and wacky music are the new trend

WHAT does a telephone say about its owner? Nothing, perhaps, other than that the owner lives in a particular area. But when it comes to answering machines, you could be offering life-style and psychological profiles to the caller. Or the underlying message on your machine could be one of fun, as is increasingly happening in Bombay.

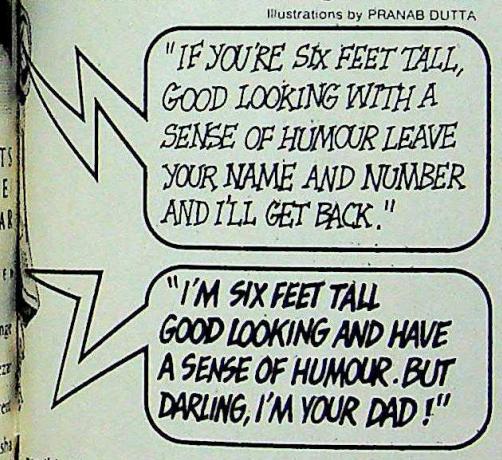
Often, it isn't just the caller who has a lot of fun listening to the not-at-home message. Says Pooja Bedi, star of *Vishkanya* and much-seen model for the much-talked-about Kama Sutra advertisements, who enjoys cooking up new lines to keep callers engaged: "My messages are really wacky. I try to make the 20 seconds as entertaining as possible." Recently, her answering machine asked callers to leave a message if they were six feet tall, good looking and had a sense of humour. "If you fit the description, leave your name and number and I'll get back," said the machine. Sure enough, she returned home one evening to find her machine unspooling. "I'm six feet tall, good looking and have a sense of humour. But, darling, I'm your dad."

Like most owners of answering machines between the ages of 20 and 35, she quickly changed the message when *Cine Blitz* did a story on her. The new one was done to a rap rhythm and played on her public image: *Pooja Bedi is my name/Stealing husbands is my game/If you think I'm going insane*/Cine Blitz *is to blame.*

Rap seems to be in vogue with answering machine owners in Bombay city. Stage actress Nikki Vijayakar's machine plays the number *Let's Talk About Sex* by a rap duo called Salt-N-Pepa which is currently doing very well on MTV and is a great favourite with millions of STAR TV watchers. Similarly, film star Kunal Goswami's machine has a personalised rap track that talks about leaving a message at the end of the beep with a voice-over saying: "Please speak up with a deep sound." Says photographer Farookh Chothia, who has a gone-for-a-funeral voice saying he isn't home: "Ranjit Barot (jazz drummer) offered to do me a rap track—lyrics and all—but I still haven't had the nerve to say yes."

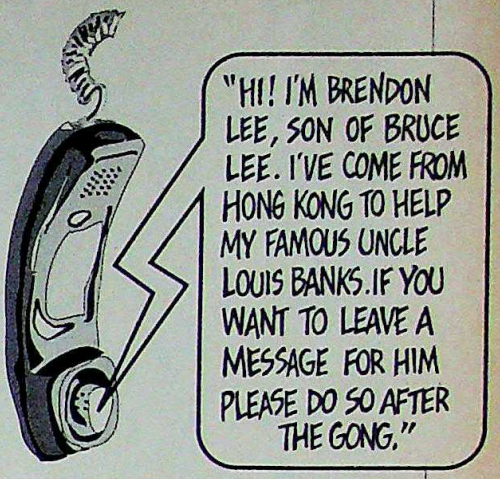
Rap isn't the only tune though. Software engineer Raghu Datta, for instance, has recorded the routine message—leave your name and number and I'll get back—with the latest Dire Straits song, *Calling Elvis*, playing distinctly in the background.

Illustrations by PRANAB DUTTA



If it isn't music, then of course, it must be humour. From industrialist Jaydeep Garware to Gautam Singhania, everyone has answering machines that are famous for their 20-second burst of humour. Musician Louis Banks has a routine that leaves unsuspecting callers gasping for a moment. "Hi! I'm Brendon Lee, son of Bruce Lee," says a hysterical back-streets-of-Kowloon voice spoofing Kung Fu movie dialogue. It goes on to say: "I've come all the way from Hong Kong to help my famous uncle Louis Banks. If you want to leave a message for him, please do so after the gong." An ear-splitting Chinese gong goes off to let callers know that they can talk. A doctor in Bombay has a machine that has a sales pitch for itself before announcing its nationality (Swedish) and letting people leave a message. A movie director has a song that goes: *"Bolo, bolo, kuchch to bolo...."*

Others are more innovative with their messages on their answering machines. Like actor Sayeed Jaffrey. Since callers often don't know when to start talking, Jaffrey mouths the 'beep' sound himself by way of explanation. "This is the sound you should wait for, 'beep'. Get it? 'Beep'. Okay? Now wait for the beep."

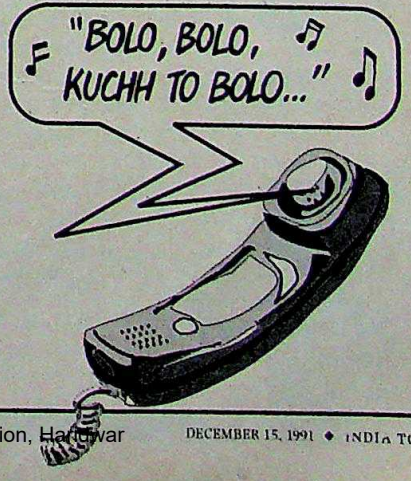


None of these messages remain the same for long. Some owners tend to change them faster than they do clothes. Pooja Bedi admits to changing them only as fast as her boy friends. Nobody, however, is certain if this is actually slower than changing outfits. Says Vijayakar, who cannot live without the convenience of an answering machine: "I would change my recording every other day if I could. Because I know that it gives people pleasure."

Humour or a new, unexpected message often reduces the frustration of not finding the person called—a two-out-of-five chance in the city—and make milder the ridiculous proposition of speaking to a machine. And what about listening to messages left on answering machines? Singhania, whose company JK Chemicals manufactures the famed Kama Sutra condoms, had a caller that bawled away like a baby. "If you want to avoid this," continued the caller when the wailing was over, "use Kama Sutra."

The caller? It should have rung a bell. Pooja Bedi, naturally.

—ARUN KATIYAR



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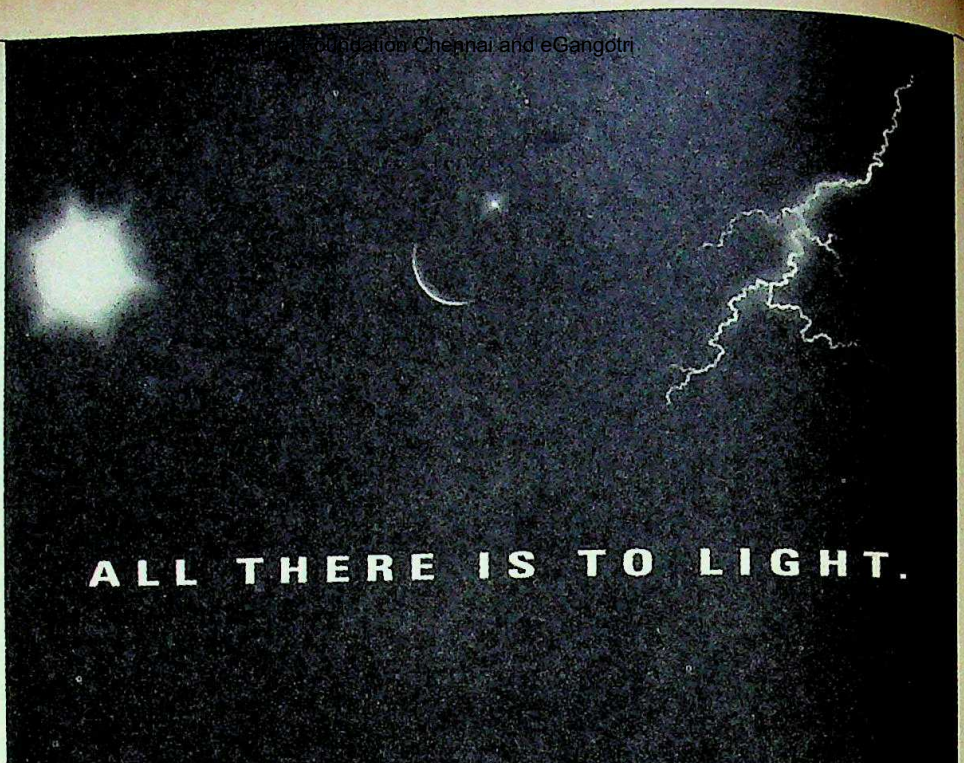

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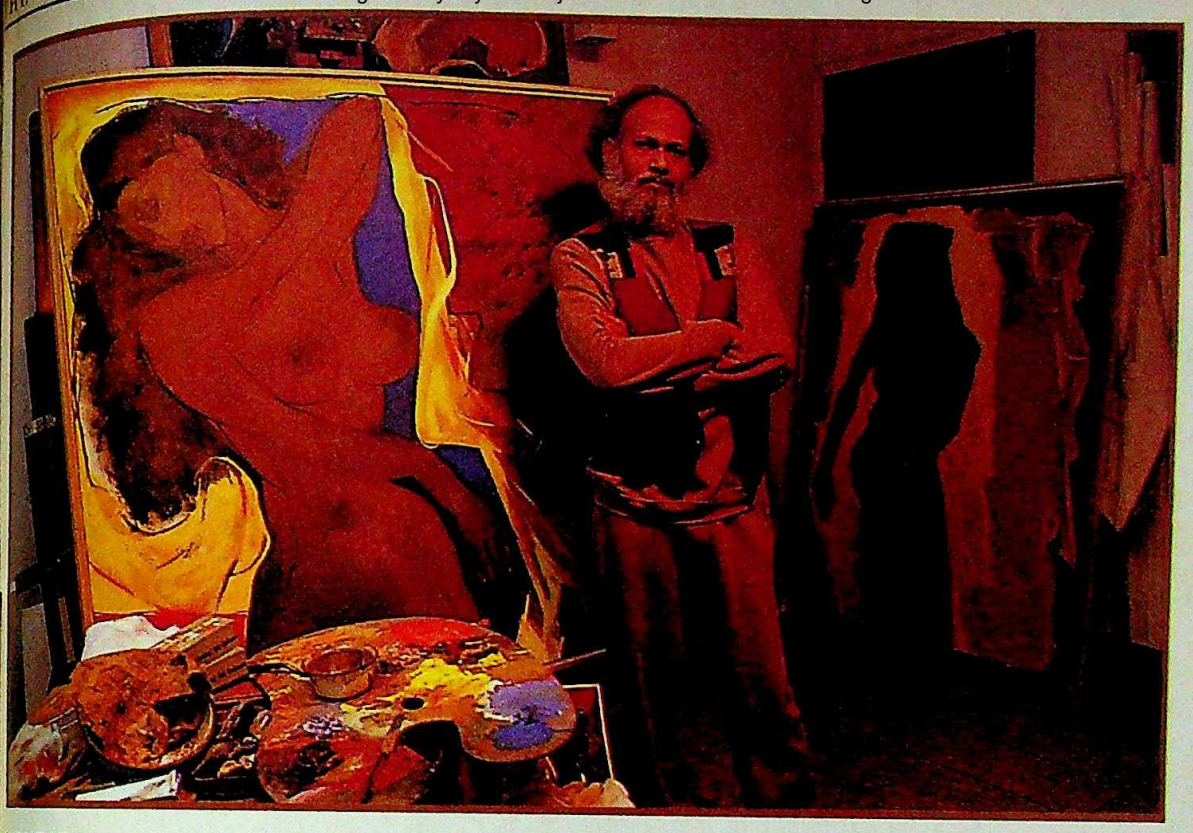

JATIN DAS

A Sensual Stillness

A retrospective reveals the painter's concerns

LIKE electricity wires hit by lightning his canvases crackle with tension. Jagged lines outline the lanky human figures and give them a visible charge. Taut, tormented figures act out the angst of the contemporary urban being. Act out as much of painter Jatin Das' work has human figures frozen in a moment of action.

The Jatin Das retrospective of about a hundred paintings—at the Lalit Kala Akademy's Rabindra Bhavan in the capital—encompasses his works done during his 22-year stay in Delhi.

It seems that the artist is with this exhibition closing a chapter on one phase of his work that included *Ashok Vajpeyi, Drowning Figure*, the homage to Safdar Hashmi or his *Man-Woman* series. And, of course, his black and white drawings with the lines fluid, yet intense. His new series, titled *Women of Clay—The body language*, has internalised the tension. The human body forms have filled out, become earthy and sensual, even raw and primeval. "I may be thinking one thing but doing something from before—ideas left over from other works, a backlog of concepts." The work may not have current autobiographical underpinnigs to it but as Das says: "My human figures were in rotation. Now the movement has come into the body and it has become still."

A stillness perceptible in the voluble painter himself. Those flashy dark eyes still juggle mischief with anger, and Das is still the public persona who at the recent auction for the Indian Cancer Society berated reluctant buyers for their stinginess. But Das, too, has become less wiry like his paintings, also less fidgety like them.

It could have something to do with crossing the half-century mark—he turned 50 on the opening day of his show. "I feel my life is again at the crossroads, and this retro is to assess myself." The major milestones have been the move from Mayurbhanj in Orissa at the age of 17 to Bombay and the J.J. School of Arts—from village to the big city. And then from a Bohemian Bombay to a bureaucratic Delhi in 1968. At the moment he feels alone—

Das with his works: nascent lyricism

"I'm separated after two marriages and my children have grown up."

Das also considers himself a "loner" in his work. He isn't, as he stresses, part of any group, movement or school. Moreover, there is a wide divergence in the assessment of his work by fellow artists. Painter Arpita Singh admires his drawings: "His lines are forceful, strong." And Kekoo Gandhy of Chemould Art Gallery who knows his work from the early days in Bombay—rates him "among the good painters of India".

There are no references to time and space in his work. "My works are metaphoric. There's no architecture, but bare bodies, not nudes." But those bare bodies are now mostly female and full-bodied, more Indian and earthy. Like sculpture really. "I've looked at the working class women, they don't have manipulated or manicured bodies or gestures, like the city woman." Yet not many people buy these paintings as they don't want bare bodies hanging on their living-room walls.

In a sense Das' personae never had a nationality, an identity. But in his new series, his women of clay are decidedly Eastern, if not specifically Indian—indicating perhaps a new departure for the volatile painter.

—MADHU JAIN

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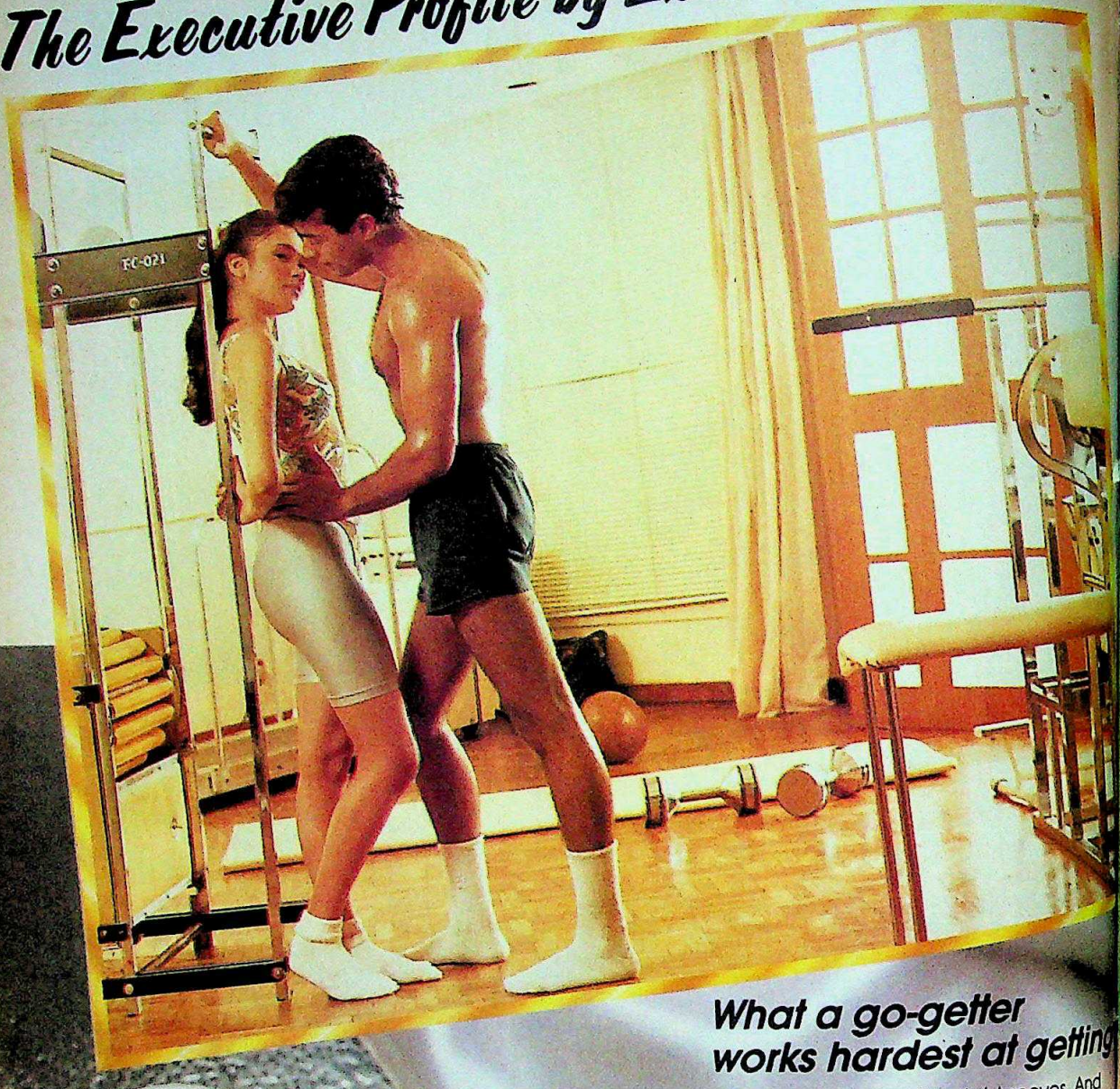
The Executive Profile by Executive Club



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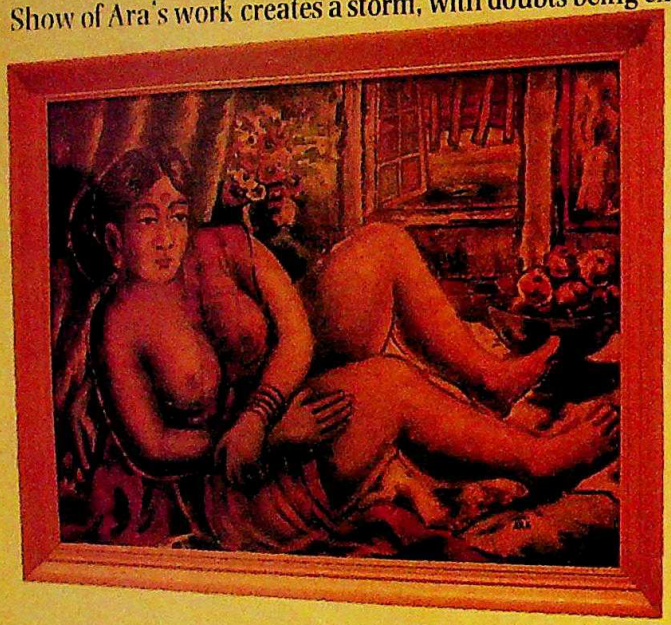
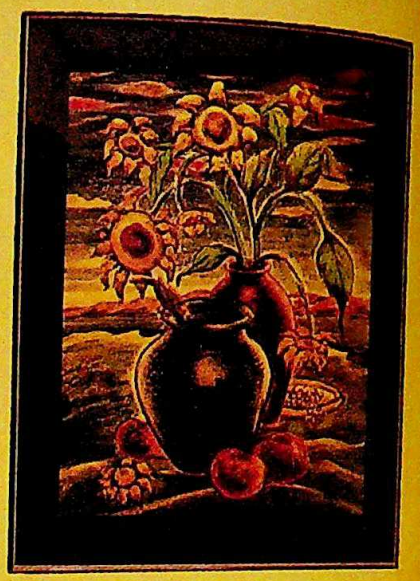
ARA PAINTINGS

Controversial Canvases

Show of Ara's work creates a storm, with doubts being expressed on the exhibits' authenticity





THE world of art in Bombay shed its patina of culture last fortnight. A volley of allegations from art dealers, painters and critics found its way into the media, making for a lively battle. In the eye of the storm was an exhibition of 12 paintings by the late legendary K.H. Ara. The allegation: many of the paintings put on sale by art dealer Ashish Nagpal were fake. This, despite the fact that each painting was authenticated by senior art critic Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni, familiar with Ara's work for 40 years.

Ara contemporary, Baburao Sadwelkar, former director of art, Maharashtra, asserts: "They are fakes—I am 1,000 per cent certain." Others, like artist Akbar Padamsee, were not so sure. Says he: "Nagpal is a very good dealer but these paintings belong to a phase of Ara I didn't know." Adds art dealer Kekoo Gandhy, who knew Ara personally: "When I saw the exhibition, I knew they were fakes."

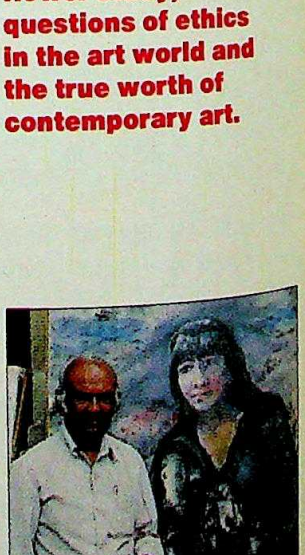
But Nadkarni stands by his certificates, for which he was reportedly paid Rs 10,000. "The rumours are being floated because Gandhy's position is challenged," he argues. And Nagpal's only comment is: "I am watching the developments."

Critics meanwhile are questioning the technique in the displayed works. Ara was part of the Progressive Art Movement along with M.F. Husain, Newton Souza, V.S. Gaitonde. Unable to afford oils and canvas, he used water colours on paper to capture still-life and crude nudes with a ferocity and a certain untidiness. Sadwelkar says Ara's vibrant strokes were due to the smooth paper he used, while some of the paintings on show were on handmade paper. Even Nadkarni admits: "I didn't study this aspect." While substantive proof remains elusive, some doubts would clear if Nagpal disclosed the previous owners' identities. But he is firm: "Why should I answer every art dealer around? Everyone knows the truth behind the charges." But with each of the seven paintings selling for over Rs 30,000, Nagpal could have made an estimated Rs 3 lakh, if rumours hadn't taken root.

The controversy raises larger questions of ethics and the true worth of contemporary art. Increasingly, fakes are making their way into the market; for instance, fake Jamini Roys.

At least one art collector, Ayesha Shroff, who picked up two Aras at the exhibition, had no regrets: "The rumours are ridiculous. I trust Nagpal." But, in the cut-throat art market, Nagpal will need more than the odd customer on his side. —ARUN KATIYAR

The controversy over Ara's disputed paintings, which includes a nude and flower study, raises questions of ethics in the art world and the true worth of contemporary art.



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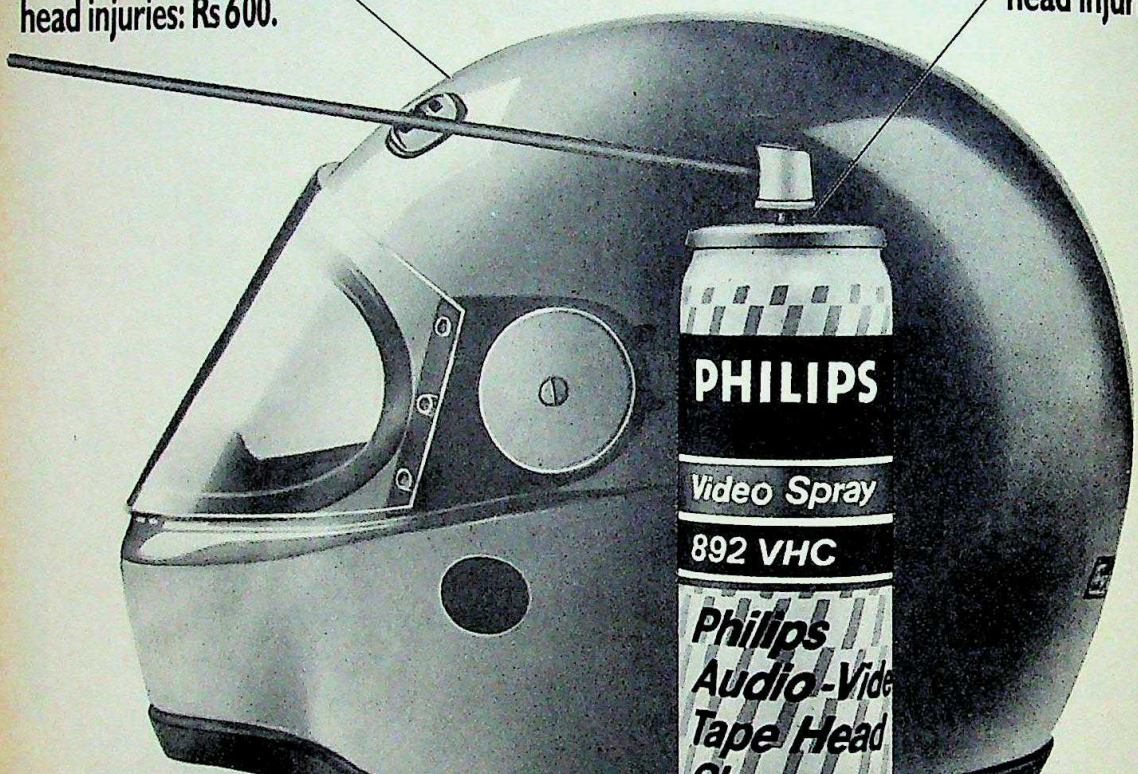

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CLARION

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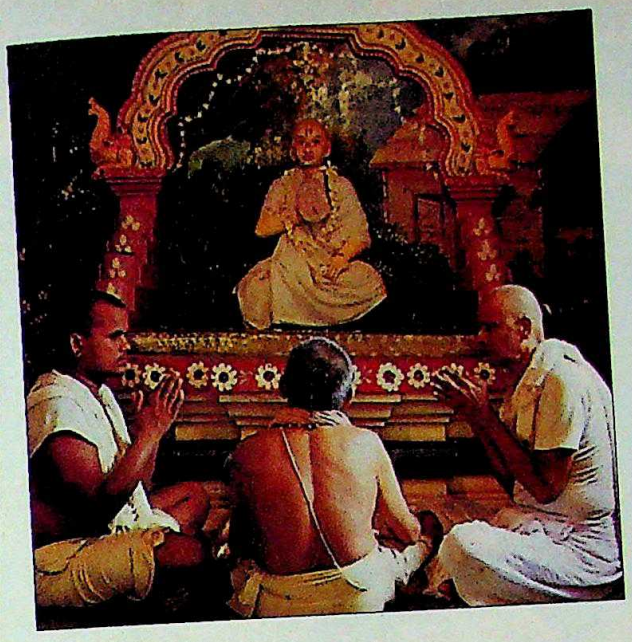
◆ Some MPs are already practising in front of their mirrors. For, come December, question hour in Parliament will be televised. Mandi House men hope that the MPs will now think twice before jumping into the well of the House. G.P. Thakur, Congress(I) spokesman, feels that this image-improving device will have a sobering effect on those who create *hungamas*." S. Jaipal Reddy of the Janata Dal is more realistic: "The dignified will be more dignified, the undignified more so because they have to catch the attention."
Unfortunately, it's not all on the House. As the telecast will not be live, the more colourful use of language and gestures will be snipped off at the editing table. Because, boys will be boys.

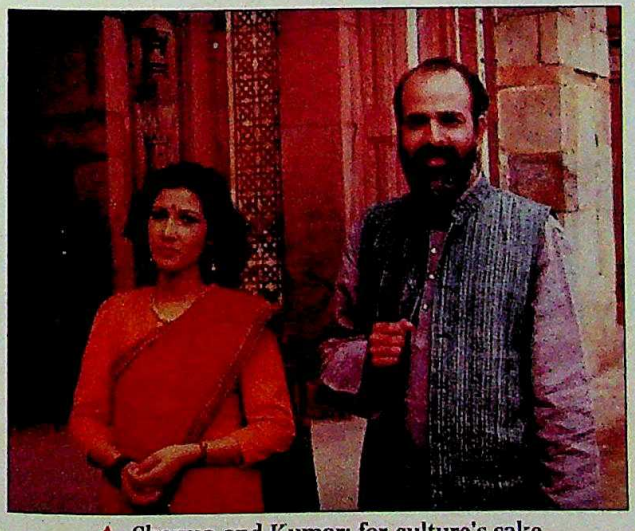
◆ Culture in the morning, culture in the evening and culture after supper. Sometimes, it seems no doesn't know how to say no. Siddharth Kak has got a six-episode extension for his *Surabhi*. But since Mandi House had already promised half of the series to Sri-TV, *Surabhi*'s been given a morning slot while simultaneously the programme, in its new avatar of *Taana-Baana*, comes on in the evenings. The new team consists of Yashi Kumar and Bharati Sharma who is from the National School of Drama Repertory. *Taana-Baana* wants to delve deeper into the how's of culture. It has experts like Irfan Habib, chairman of the Indian Council for Historical Research, and academics from universities.

◆ While Ayodhya was in the eye of the storm last year and communal hatred at red glow, DD regularly aired Naqvi's apt cameos showed Naqvi's apt cameos of cultural synthesis. Suddenly, these—buoyed by Naqvi's booming voice—were taken off. Now, Naqvi has made a moving film, *Sufism and the Composite Culture of India* which puts all these little bits and much more together. This journey through the very India we now live in shows this synthesis to be alive and well. Pilgrims to the Lord Ayappa shrine in Sabarimala stop to pray at the shrine of the Muslim saint Vavar Sami where a Muslim priest gives them *vibhuti*. The Mananiars of Jaisalmer sing with equal passion about Meera Bai, Buleshah or Shah Abdul Lateef. Hindu Patels burn incense at the shrine of Haji Abdul Rahman in Thane. And most of the Oriya folk songs about Lord Jagannath were written by Sal Beg. The camerawork may not be innovative but the film would be far more effective than many of the propaganda films being spewed by DD. It also shows that the temple at Ayodhya is not the only shrine in the country.



▲ Naqvi's *Sufism*: more than propaganda

Illustration by JAYANTO



▲ Sharma and Kumar: for culture's sake

◆ DD men will now have to scurry even more to Madras for stay orders. (*See Teletalk, November 30*). Last fortnight the Madras High Court gave the director-general, DD, three months to draw up guidelines on how they plan to fund television programmes. The court also ordered that no new programmes could be commissioned until this was done. The court order follows the petition filed by two Madras-based producers who challenged DD's decision to commission the Tamil classic, *Silapathykaran*.

Madras is certainly keeping Mandi House on its toes. The judge also nullified the contract for this serial, not mincing words about "pressures" on the authorities, including the "highest constitutional functionary, the President of India".

—MADHU JAIN

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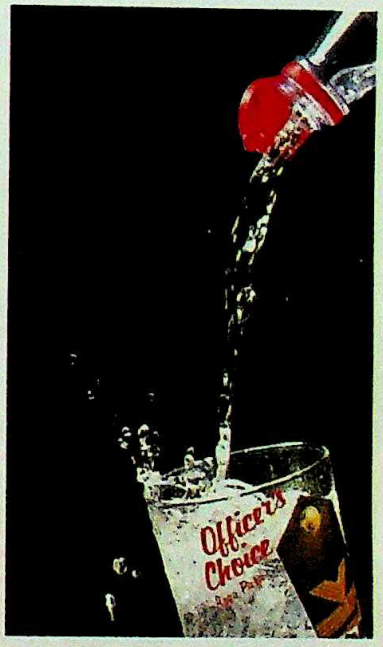

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E INDIA KET TEAM

LET THE CELEBRATIONS CONTINUE

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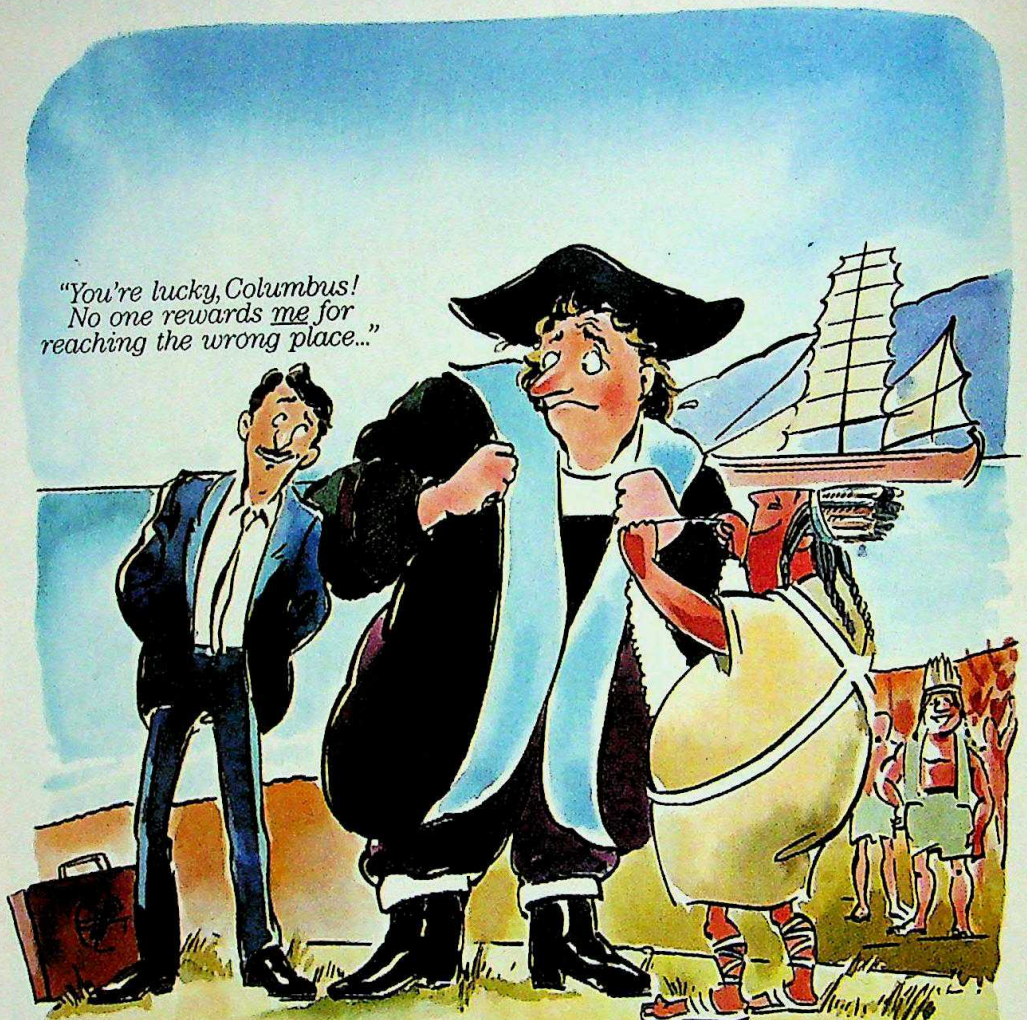

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UNITED KINGDOM

Oriental Exposure

Pakistani strippers create a stir by going public

SHE thinks most Asian men are the scum of the earth. Yet, Zarina Ramzan, 24, has been entertaining them with her hugely-successful strip-tease act at private parties in London. In the business for the last two years, along with her friend, Qumar Ashraf, 19, the two girls caused a minor sensation recently when they went public with a show at a south London night-club.

Posters came up around the city advertising the "Topless Striptease Duo". And immediately, death threats from fundamentalist Muslims began to pour in. "I've been told I'll get acid thrown in my face," says Zarina, adding with pride: "This is bigger than Rushdie. There's a contract out for us. We have to go out in disguise." When mullahs asked her to cancel her show, she refused, declaring in retaliation: "Some of these mullahs peep from behind curtains at our shows."

The show which lasts about an hour starts off with numbers from *Pakeezah* and *Mukaddar ka Sikander*. Then the two women remove their underwear. Their repertoire includes a lesbian scene. "This really shocks the men. I love it," Zarina admits.

At private parties it works like this: one man asks his friends if they're interested in the strip-tease. The "host" arranges for a house. On the appointed night, the men wait for the girls. Some drink. The charges: £400 in London and up to £800 in north England.

The two strippers claim to have performed for relatives of prominent Pakistani politicians, businessmen and members of the Indian film world. Zarina's role models are Madonna and Benazir Bhutto, "because they're strong women; I have no patience for weak women."

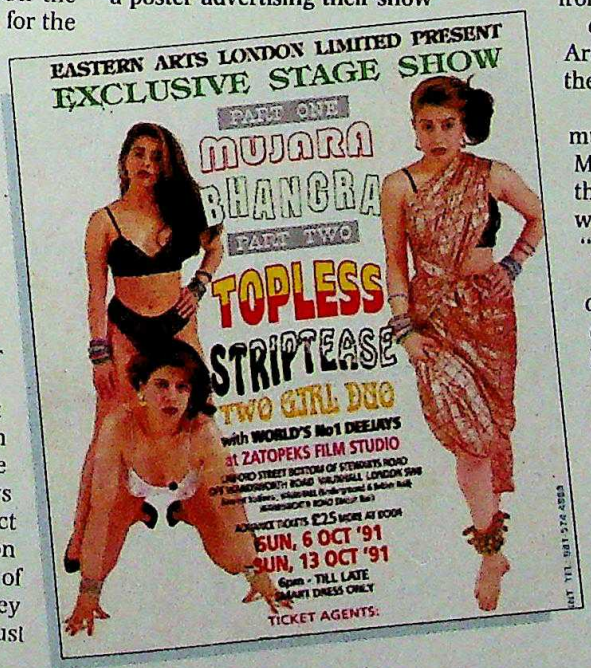
Despite the tough front, it sometimes gets too hot for them to handle. So the women have bouncers to protect them. Says Qumar: "A lot of the men expect us to have sex with them." Soon after the strip-tease starts, some of the men start undressing. They may dance with the girls but must keep their hands to themselves. But, as Zarina says: "They don't. It can get wild." One night, a man tried to stab Qumar. Neither, however, seems bothered. What does bother them is the hypocrisy of Asian men, who take docile wives and yet keep a "modern" girl around for fun. Says Zarina: "My best friends are high-class prostitutes and their clients are mostly Asians."

Her defiance has exacted a heavy price in terms of family relations. Her family—who came to England from Multan in Pakistan—has nothing to do with her. The women began their shows secretly over two years ago when they still lived at home. When their parents found out, they left home.

Zarina's father—a barrister—died suddenly in 1984 leaving the family destitute and Zarina at the mercy of male relatives who, she says, sexually abused her. After a stint at drama school, she decided she could make more money by stripping. Qumar met her when she too had left her family. They had wanted her to become a dentist. "During the day, I was an innocent Asian girl, but at night I would go out clubbing. I couldn't stand the hypocrisy any longer, so I ran away from home." Now, home is a seedy one-bedroom flat near Marble Arch in central London, shared by the two friends.

SHYAM TEKWANI

■ Zarina and Qumar; and (below) a poster advertising their show



Despite their defiance of the mullahs' diktats, they are devout Muslims. Zarina carries a copy of the Koran with her while Qumar wears a gold pendant with "Allah" inscribed on it.

While they have set their eyes on Hollywood, chances of the dream taking off seem remote. Meanwhile, they travel at night to strange houses, not knowing which face might belong to a fanatic with a vial of acid or a knife in his pocket. They say they want to marry one day. But as even Zarina acknowledges: "It's going to be very difficult to find a man who can handle what I do."

—TONY SINGH in London

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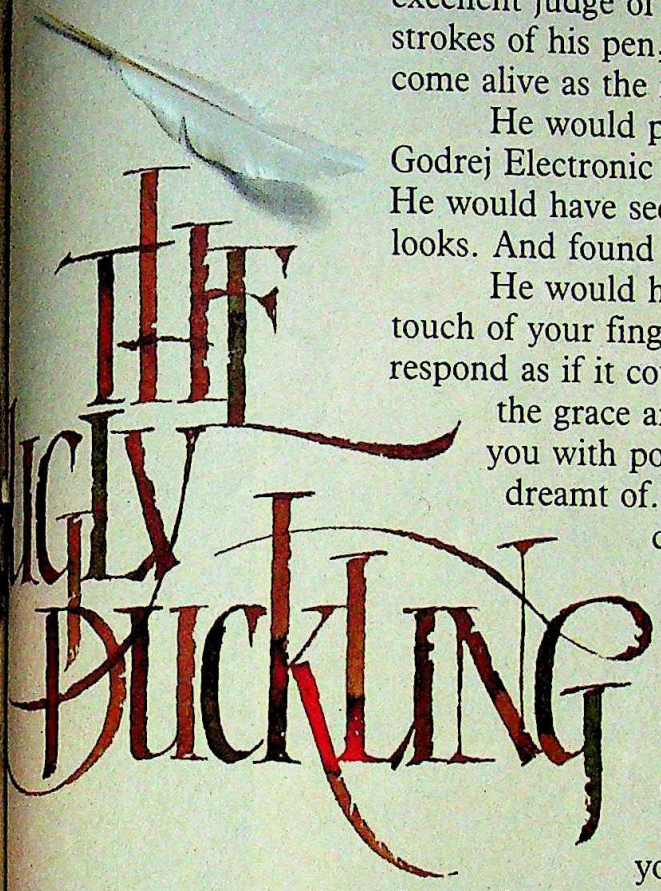

Hans Christian Andersen was indeed an excellent judge of character. And with a few strokes of his pen, he could make his duckling come alive as the most desirable swan it really was.

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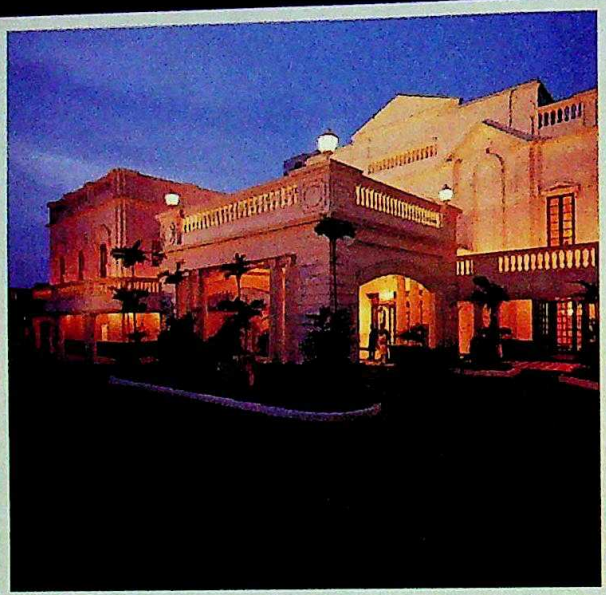

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UNITED STATES

Ethnic Entertainment

Emigres now have a wider choice of Indian channels

INDIAN television has finally come of age in the US. And beaming the fact home last month was New York's cable channel, ITV. When it telecast the Sharjah Cup live, cricket-crazy Indians sent its ratings soaring. Increasingly, Indian emigres are watching what they want to. In every major US city, there is now a channel which entertains the Indian community for at least two hours a week.

And in megapolises like New York and Los Angeles, there are so many choices that Indian viewers can't believe their eyes. A favourite is ITV that gives a taste of home to its nearly 25,000 subscribers for eight hours every day. Promoters have got into the act in a big way, for the potential immigrant Indian audience of over 7.5 lakh is there for the picking.

Not surprising then that most Indians should have seen the soap-epic *Mahabharat*, or Rajiv Gandhi's cremation, on their own TV sets. Says Dolly Singh, 40, a bank teller living in New York City: "We are not missing out much on what goes on back home."

Although the format of these programmes is akin to Doordarshan's, the quality is much better. There is film-based entertainment, a news round-up and interviews with eminent Indians, but the *Chitrahaar*-type segments, for example, are theme-based—devoted to a music director or singer. New ideas include songs-on-request, as aired by New Jersey-based Mehfil. Says Daljeet Panesar, producer of Everest TV in Chicago: "Competition is stiff. Without the right mix, we could end up as an also-ran."

Established in 1986, ITV's mix includes news in Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu, two weekly movies, hours of Bollywoodana and hit soaps like *Buniyaad* and *Mahabharat*. Spurred by the Sharjah success, it will go live next year for the World Cup too.

This is a far cry from the humble beginnings of the late '70s. Appalled by the total lack of Indian news on the American media, Dr Banad N. Viswanath, a New York-based cardiologist, decided in 1976 to lease time to launch a one-hour weekly Indian programme. Soon other Indians promoters followed suit. Asiana TV in Houston and Asian Entertainment in Boston and New England had came up by the early '80s.

Discerning viewers, however, pick holes in Indian channels. Not many are managed by professionals. The result: programmes often appear to be like an amateur cook's stew. Says Arun Kumaraswamy, a Ph.D. student at the New York University: "I stopped watching them. I get more updated news from my computer network."

Too many advertisements is another common complaint. Says Shanti Bakshi, a Washington DC restauranteur: "Sometimes, one does not know where the news ends and the advertisements begin." This happens when Bollywood stars are in town and the commercials for their shows precede promotional snippets. But, argues Rohit Vyas, news anchor, Vision of India, ITV's sister concern: "To Indians living here, a show by Rekha or Amitabh Bachchan is news."

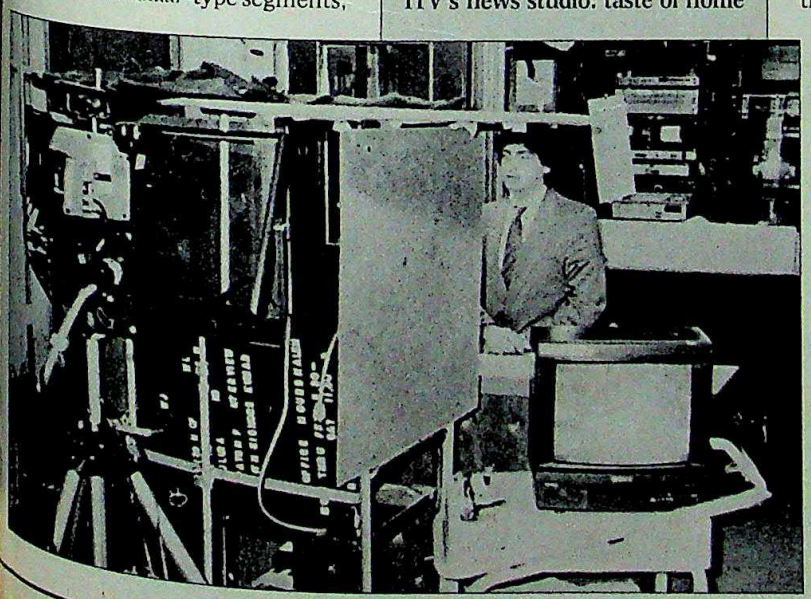
Producers too carp about insufficient support from the community and advertising revenue that barely defrays the costs. The advertisers are local grocery stores, jewellery shops and Indian lawyers. The rates are as low as $80 for a half-minute spot. But after Pakistanis, Sri Lankans and West Indians started tuning in to the boisterous *Chitrahaars* and news, the advertisers' profile is changing. Says Pramod Kulkarni, an Asiana partner: "We are trying to get companies like Coca-Cola, AT&T and Citibank to advertise with us."

Despite the glitches, intrepid impresarios are going ahead with ambitious expansion plans. For tens of thousands of Indians nostalgic for their native country, this promises to make Indian telly as much of a reality as movie masala and hot curry, half a world away.

—SUNITA WADEKAR BHARGAVA
in New York

Promoters are looking for corporate advertisers and are planning to expand.

ITV's news studio: taste of home



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Dangerous Delusion

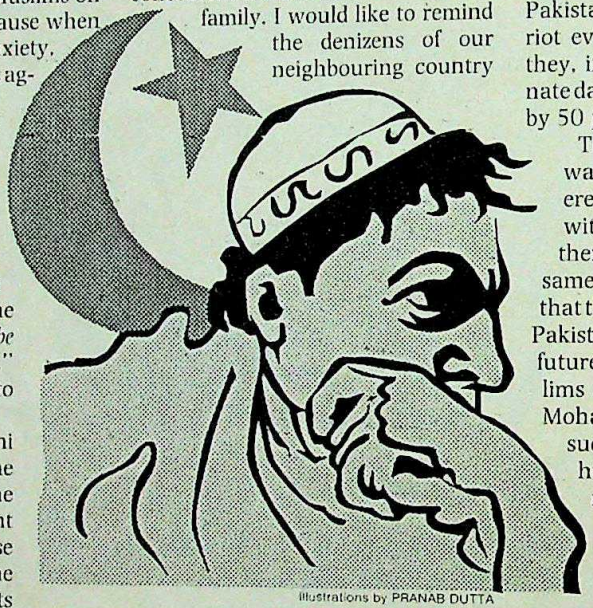
AS the Ayodhya issue escalates, Pakistan is increasingly showing "great concern" for the lives and protection of Muslims in India. However, let the new generation of Indian Muslims be heard loud and clear that we do not have extra-territorial loyalties. Pakistan may have been the best thing to have happened to the Pakistani but its creation has only been enormously damaging to the cause of Muslims on this side of the border. Because when Pakistan flaunts its anxiety, Hindu chauvinism becomes aggravated in this country.

When a small segment of Indian Muslims celebrates the victory of Pakistani team over India in cricket matches, it isn't for the love of Pakistan. It is merely a show to tease the majority community. As the Urdu proverb goes: "*Hubbe Ali nahin, bughze Moaviya.*" (Not for the love of Ali, but to spite Moaviya.)

Married to a Pakistani and having visited my home in India regularly, I take the liberty of asking a pertinent question: will Pakistan please define its sympathies with the Indian Muslims? Had it left its borders open for us to migrate, the story would have been totally different. Pakistan must remember it is not the promised land for Muslims as in the case of Israel, where a Jew from any part of the world is welcome to settle. In fact, Pakistan hasn't even accommodated the immigrant Biharis who are Pakistani nationals but have been stranded in Bangladesh for years.

A frequent assertion that any Indian traveller to Pakistan is subjected to is: "*Musalmaanon ka to aap ke yahán bahut bura haal hai.*" (Muslims in India are in a very bad way.) What amazes me is that the opinion does not vary an iota whether it comes from an autorickshaw driver, a Mercedes Benz owner, an airline pilot, a housewife or a newspaper editor. The presumption is the same irrespective of varying degrees of intellect. On hearing a response to the contrary, the Pakistani is almost disappointed. It bothers my conscience to see single-track human concern compartmentalised by religion. Are poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and caste wars not equally worthy causes to worry about?

The Pakistani feels uneasy listening to the rational view-point of educated Indian Muslims. I say this with the authority of first-hand experience. In whispers, they often say that they can speak the truth and do not need to conceal the horrors as it was all in the family. I would like to remind the denizens of our neighbouring country that all Indians also have the freedom of speech. Whether our grievances are attended to or neglected, the problem is purely Indian.



Illustrations by PRANAB DUTTA

The success of Indian Muslims makes the Mohajir uneasy. For, this negates his rootless existence, where he pines for the nuances of a shared heritage.

When a Pakistani is reminded of Muslim brethren killing one another in his country, the topic is conveniently brushed aside as being a different issue. I often say flippantly that I would rather be killed by a Hindu bullet and go straight to heaven as a *shaheed* (martyr) rather than by a Muslim and end up in hell accountable for my sins and misdeeds.

Another ludicrous query one hears in Pakistan is: "When are your people converting to Hinduism?" For instance, recently a young intelligent woman artist in Islamabad asked me as to when we were going to adopt Hindu names so as to make our lives in India easier.

Stupid, irrelevant questions are best answered with absurd statements. I promptly replied that the family had decided to name my newly-born nephew Lakshman and that I was considering changing my name to Sita. Similarly, when informed by the Pakistani that there is a Hindu-Muslim riot every day in India, I insist that they, in fact, occur once every alternate day—thereby cutting the statistic by 50 per cent.

This vicarious compassion towards Indian Muslims, I discovered to my dismay, is an obsession with the immigrants who still call themselves Mohajirs. These are the same people who were convinced that they had to migrate from India to Pakistan for a better and more secure future. The success of Indian Muslims since independence makes the Mohajir somewhat uneasy. For their success, in effect, serves to negate his rootless existence, which makes him pine for the cultural nuances of a shared heritage.

A sizeable population of these Mohajirs belongs to the northern part of India. This to an extent explains the limited knowledge that Pakistanis have of Indian Muslims in Kerala, Gujarat, or Assam for that matter, with whom they share little or no cultural affinity.

Tragically, the Mohajir still hasn't been accepted by the true sons-of-the-soil—that is, the Punjabis, the Sindhis, the Pathans or the Balochis. In fact, the Mohajir is often pejoratively referred to as "*Tilyar*" by others, the allusion being to a migratory bird. The denial of equal job opportunities to them led to a sense of deprivation which gave birth to the powerful, volatile political party, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement.

If the recently initiated dialogue between India and Pakistan is to yield any results, it is important that Pakistan dilute its role of the pan-Islamic world's self-styled champion. ■

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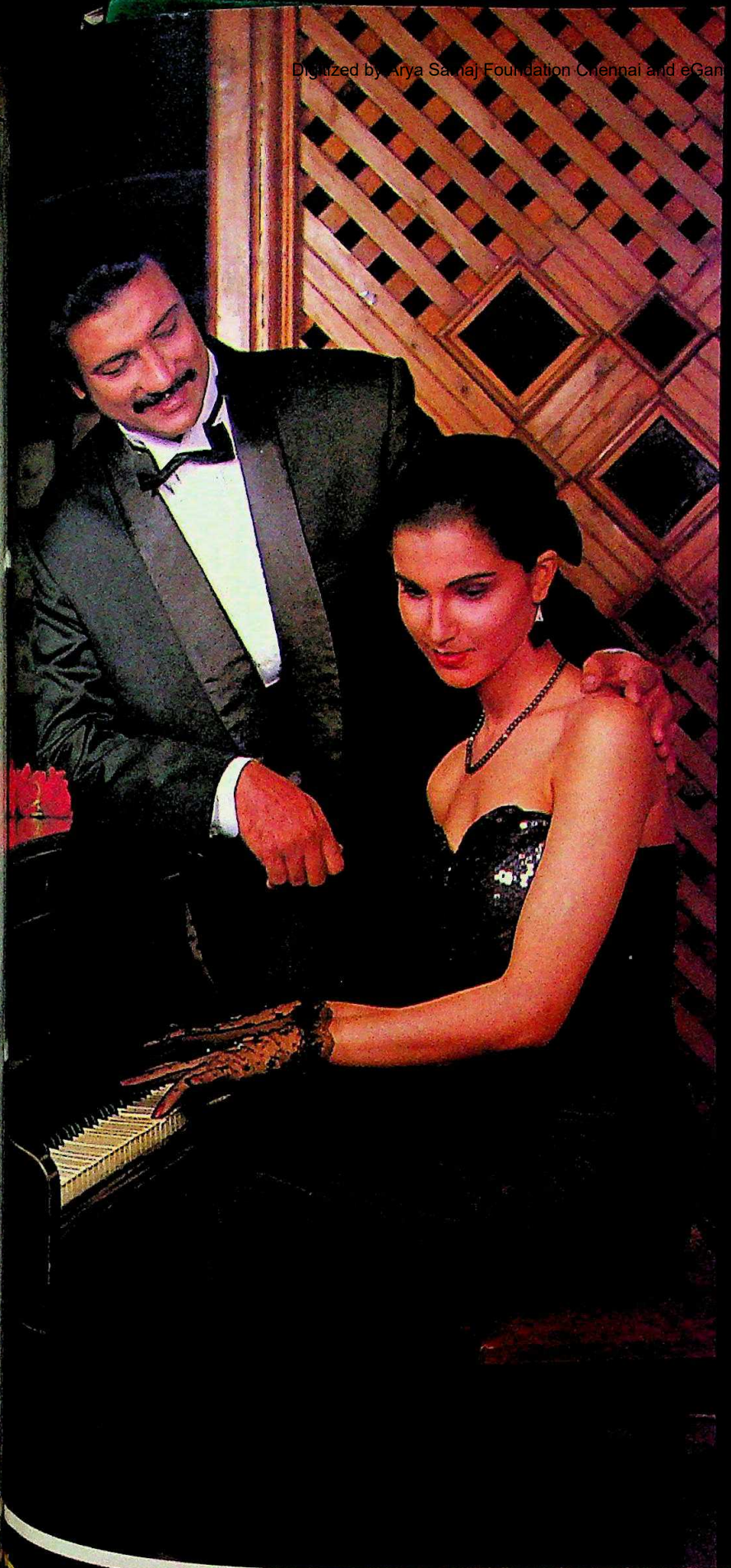

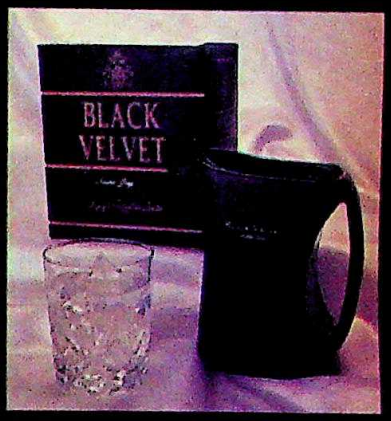

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NAMAS BHOJANI

MEDHA PATKAR

Woman of Steel

Recognition at last for the fiery crusader

At a rally at the Sardar Sarovar project

HER threadbare khadi sari only emphasises her frailness. Strands of prematurely grey hair flap around her head in reckless abandon. And worn-out canvas shoes on her tiny feet complete the almost waif-like image that she conveys.

Yet beneath the fragile exterior lies a woman of steel. And Medha Patkar, 36, has displayed plenty of that metal in her relentless struggle to thwart the implementation of the mammoth Rs 6,400-crore Sardar Sarovar Dam Project. In just five years she has successfully forged together 120 disparate organisations into a fighting force that three recalcitrant state governments—Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra—have found difficult to contend with. Maneka Gandhi, former minister of state for environment, says admiringly: "She has singlehandedly kept the movement going even when there was no hope of success."

In doing so Patkar has taken the ecological movement onto a higher plane. From one concerned with just destruction of forests to that of protecting basic human rights. Eminent ecologist Nalni Jayal thinks "Medha's achievement has been the ability to galvanise village communities to fight for their rights when projects which threaten to uproot them come up".

Now the fiery crusader has gained international recognition. Last month, her movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, was among the four environment groups awarded the Swedish Right To Livelihood Award, known as the alternative Nobel. Patkar's reaction was muted: "We're happy but such awards can change attitudes."

Her dogged persistence, command over the facts, and ability to galvanise the people to be ousted from the Narmada Valley have made her a formidable adversary.

Not hers. Last week, as she was to fly to Stockholm to receive the award, she was back in Maharashtra's Dhule district organising another of her famous rallies. Her arrest by the state police sparked off an international protest that saw her released the next day.

Patkar, however, is used to such adversity. When she first moved to the valley in 1985, even the one lakh people who were to be ousted by the project were not receptive. Undaunted, she travelled through the 225 affected villages by bus, on hired motorcycles and even on foot. Gradually, she gained acceptance by living with the adivasis, learning their language and eating their food. Patkar explains: "We haven't gone about making ideologies and presenting them in seminars. We wanted the people to know their rights and for that we had to reach them through their roots." Today the oustees revere her. Says Choglal, an adivasi: "For us she is Narmada *maiya*. If she leaves, we would be motherless."

There are other reasons for her

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success. Apart from having an almost computer-like memory for faces and names, Patkar has complete command over her facts. Jayal says: "She can outargue any opponent." However, not everyone agrees. Hasmukh Patel, an officer in Gujarat's Narmada Development Ministry says: "She plays with facts to buttress her arguments."

But her commitment to her cause is unquestionable. She refuses to accept any foreign funds and the Andolan doesn't even have a jeep or telephone of its own. And in a more controversial decision she decided to keep her movement completely free of politicians. Even Maneka Gandhi was not allowed to speak at a meeting once.

Patkar's own inspiration comes from her parents. Her father, Vasant Khanolkar, is a trade unionist, while her mother works with a women's body called Swadhar. Patkar has a Master's in Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Bombay. The turning point came when she moved to Ahmedabad to work with Gujarat tribals. A chance visit to the Narmada Valley made her shift there to take up the oustees' cause. She even gave up her Ph.D. And has no regrets.

The tribals, led by Patkar, are determined to stop the dam in favour of small, indigenous water-conservation schemes. But it appears to be a losing battle as the Government is likely to go ahead with the project. Even if it does, Patkar's message has gone home to all future projects. —UDAY MAHURKAR

VANSDA

Making a Difference

A new, radical scheme transforms tribals' lives

THE backward tribal taluka of Vansda is on fast forward. Thanks to the efforts of the Bharat Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF) programme. Started 10 years ago by Magsaysay winner Manubhai Desai, the scheme has radically tranformed the barren lives of the adivasis living in southern Gujarat.

The eco-friendly Gandhian model has succeeded where the Government failed to make any headway. The major thrust of the 20-member team's uplift programme has been to involve the tribals in simple scientific methods of cultivation and irrigation. Used to the slash-and-burn form of cultivation, the local adivasis have now been cutting out terraces on hill slopes, digging trenches to hold water and transplanting tree saplings.

Moreover, BAIF has devised a novel method of conserving water. They plug the rivulets of water with gunny bags stuffed with sand or soil. At each check dam, gasifers pump water to be carried to the orchards in pipes.

The results are amazing. Over 1,619 hectares of virtual wasteland have been brought under cultivation. Over nine lakh trees—including eucalyptus, bamboo, subabul and casurina—have been planted. Mango orchards are the mainstay of the 5,000-odd families covered by the programme. Plus, it has eliminated the middleman. And now BAIF markets the produce for the adivasis. The sale of mangoes and wood provides them with a monthly income of over Rs 1,500. Incredible, considering that at one time they were so desperate they had to eat dead rats. Says Nagin Ranchod Kotwalia, a local: "The BAIF *sahibs* have changed our lives."

They certainly have. Among the other achievements: low-cost housing, health care, sanitation and education. And, it has cured many tribals of alcoholism. But perhaps the best evidence of BAIF's success is the colour televisions and motorcycles that the tribals own. Among the proud owners of a Yamaha is Babanbhai Deshmukh, 41, a former alcoholic and farm labourer.

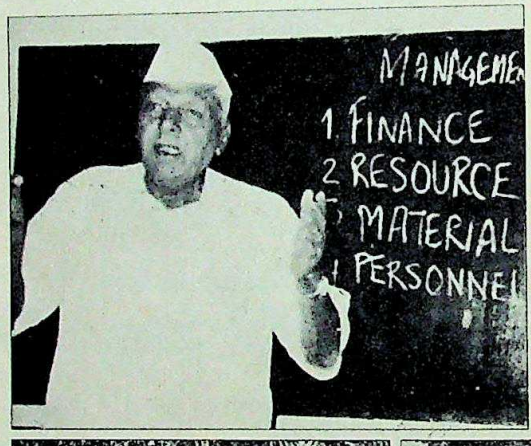
BAIF has also successfully set up a nursery as an employment generation project for women. This provides the women with a steady monthly income of Rs 300.

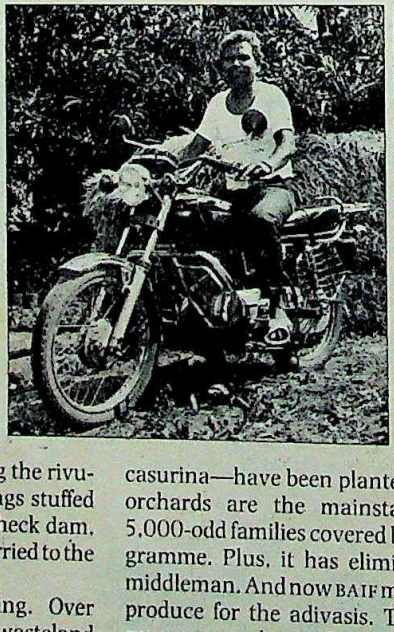
The Government's defence usually is: "We lack committed people." BAIF, on the other hand, has been successful because, as social activist Suryakanth Parikh says, "it took the scheme to the people's doorstep while officials wait for the people to come to them".

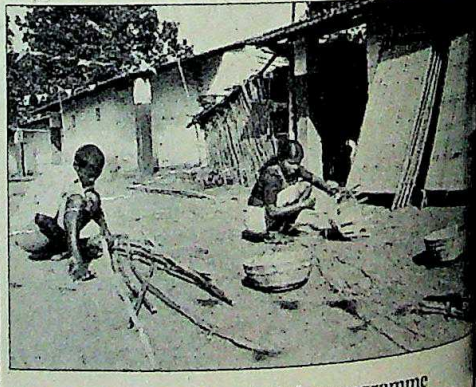
With a success story like that behind him, Desai is enthused. Says he: "What we did at Vansda can easily be replicated elsewhere."

Is the Government listening?

—UDAY MAHURKAR







Photographs by JAVED RA

Desai who founded the programme (top); and some of the beneficiaries: long strides

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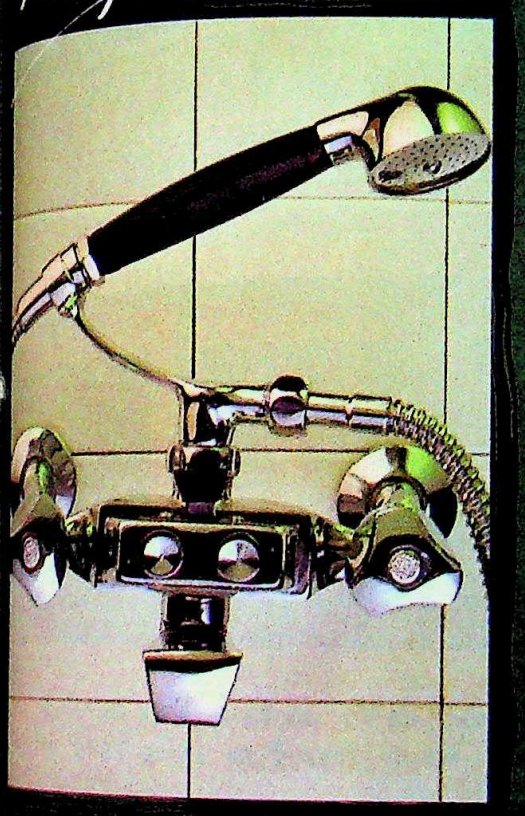
All fluff.



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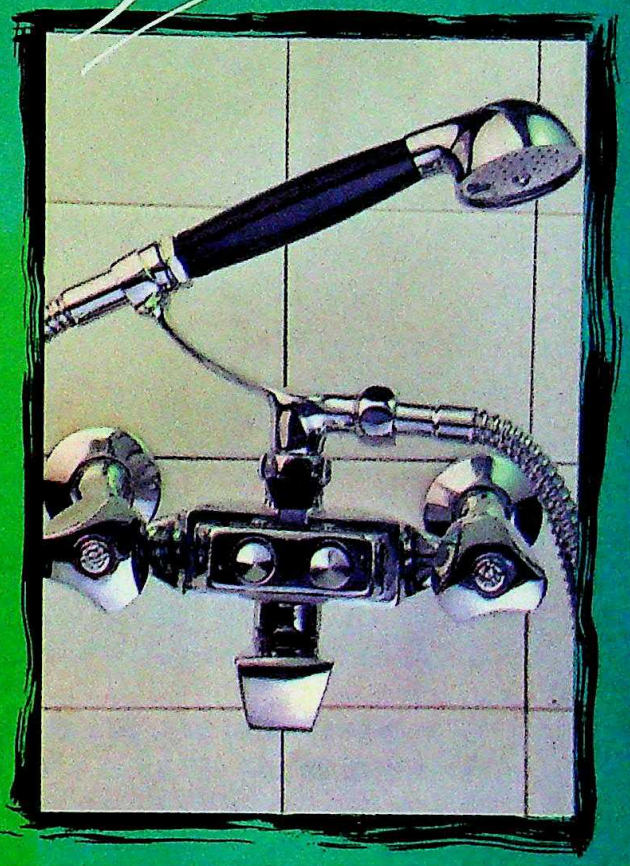

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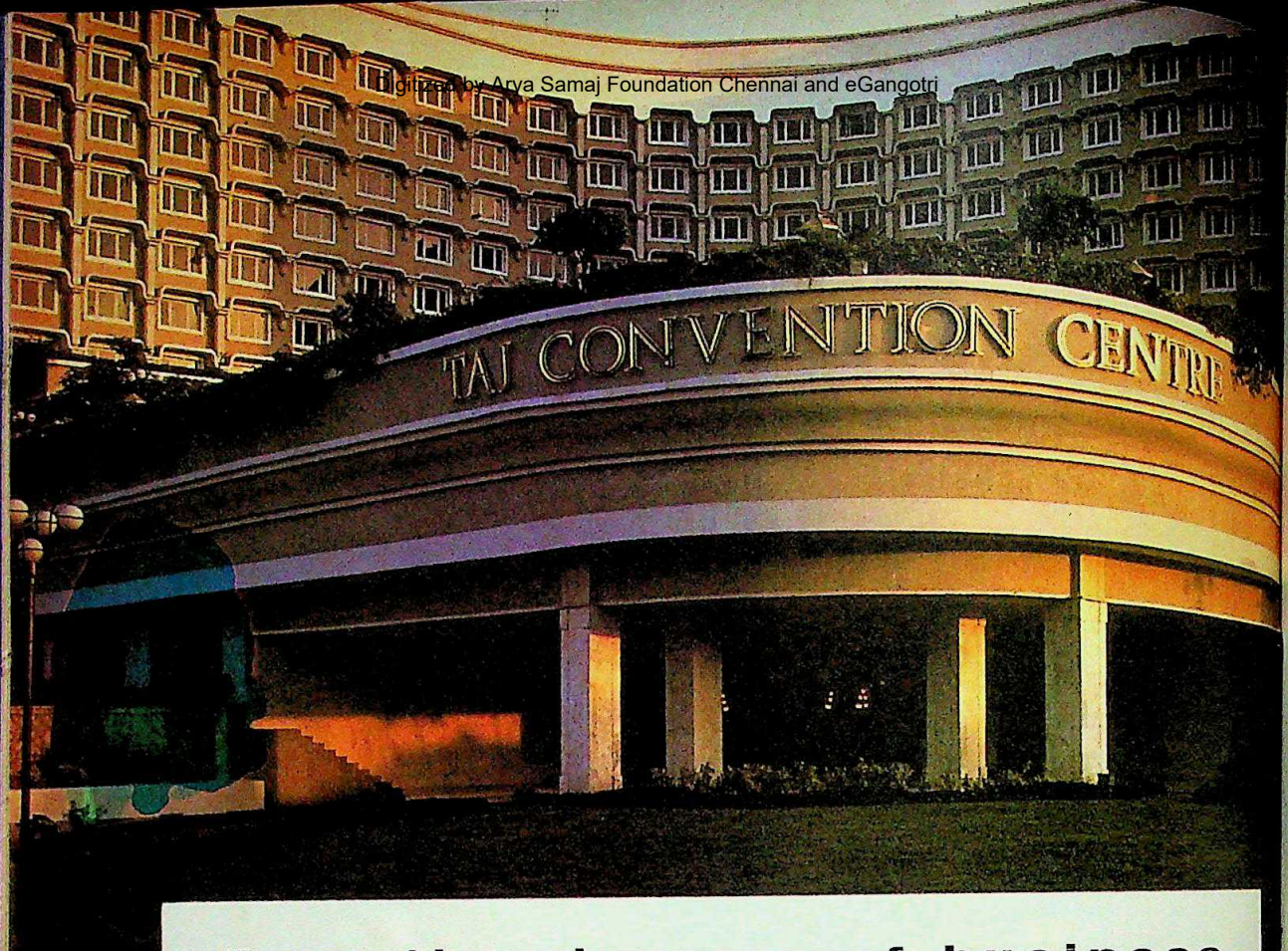
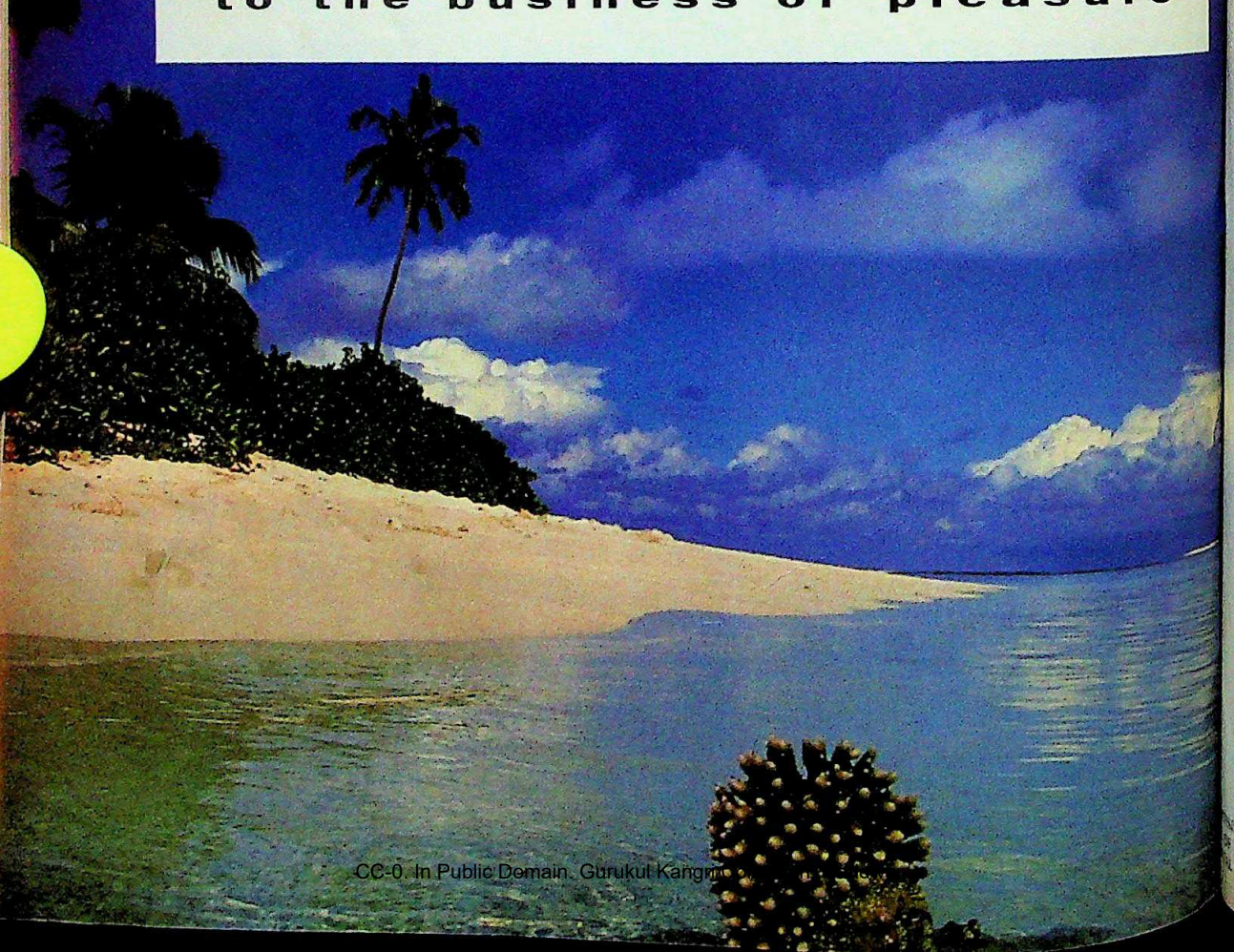


From the pleasure of business to the business of pleasure



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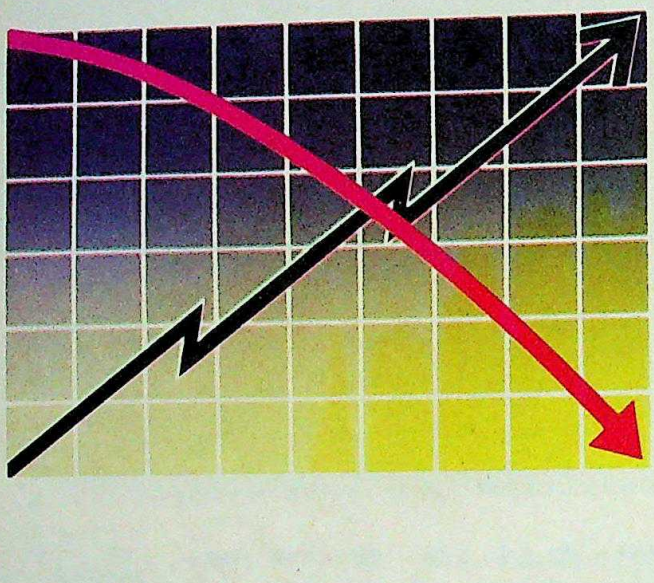

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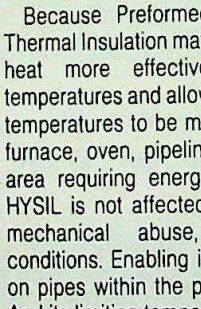

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IT'S ALL ABOUT WARMTH

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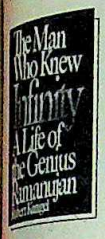
Immortal Calculations

A brilliant biography of the genius Ramanujan



THE MAN WHO KNEW INFINITY
by ROBERT KANIGEL
Scribners, Macmillan
Pages: 438
Price: Rs 730

By SHASHI THAROOR

IN January 1913, a letter arrived in Cambridge, England, in a large envelope covered with Indian stamps. It was addressed to G.H. Hardy, the foremost British mathematician of his day. "I beg to introduce myself to you," it began. "As a clerk in the Accounts Department of the Port Trust office at Madras...I have had no university education, but...."

But. The writer, Srinivasa Ramanujan, barely 25, enclosed nine pages of mathematical formulae that offered startling conclusions on such arcana as divergent series and the negative values of gamma function, refuting some of Hardy's own papers. At first Hardy thought they might be the work of a crank: but after studying the theorems he realised they "could only have been written down by a mathematician of the highest class.... They must be true because no one would have the imagination to invent them."

The letter offered only a foretaste of the prodigious calculations to come from the mind of this young man. Born so poor that he could not afford paper to record his formulae, Ramanujan was summoned to Cambridge, where he embarked on a brilliant career. And when he died at 32, at the height of his powers, he left a final notebook with 650 theorems—devised as his body was being consumed by tuberculosis. It was a tragedy, his doctor later wrote, "too deep for tears".

Kanigel has written a remarkable book about a remarkable life. He has taken a man, a social context and a specialist field, making each accessible. He has done so with encyclopedic thoroughness, meticulous research, genuine sympathy for his subject and lucid writing. Compassionate and clear, *The Man Who Knew Infinity* is a masterpiece.

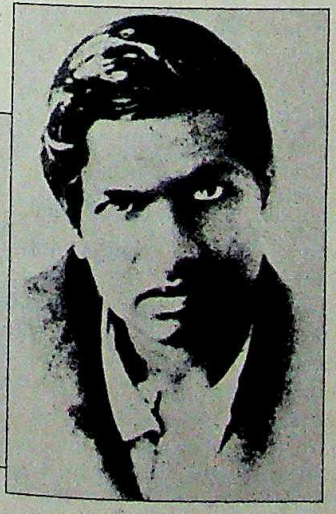
Kanigel: lucid masterpiece

Kanigel vividly portrays Ramanujan's humble birth (and a childhood marked by questions like "how far is it between clouds?"), his strong-willed mother, his schoolboy brilliance (a headmaster declared he "deserved higher than the maximum possible marks"), and his Hindu religious convictions ("An equation", he once said, "has no meaning unless it expresses a thought of God.") At 16, Ramanujan picked up George Shoobridge Carr's synoptic compilation of 5,000 equations, and was hooked on mathematics. Other subjects failed to hold Ramanujan's interest, and he twice flunked out of college. But he continued to scrawl formulae on slates, suffering years of penury until his persistence found him patrons for a shoestring stipend, a clerical job—and the letter to Cambridge that transformed his life.

The collaboration between a short, dark Tamil with a pockmarked face and glowing eyes, and Hardy, a Fellow of Trinity College, cricket player and perfectionist who prided himself on the "uselessness" of his purist mathematics, was as unlikely as it was productive. Papers flowed from them amidst the ravages of World War I; Hardy polished the rougher edges of his partner's genius and ensured its public acceptance. Kanigel does not gloss over Ramanujan's mistakes, many because he grew up isolated from advanced modern mathematics. But Ramanujan, he demonstrates, came up with a succession of astonishing insights. Eminent scholars have devoted decades to the study of his notebooks, and the task is still unfinished. Ramanujan's work retains a compelling relevance; his theorems have found applications in a variety of fields, from computer science to cryptology, particle physics to plastics, statistical mechanics to space travel.

Kanigel does not shrink from the complex mathematics involved in expounding Ramanujan's achievement. There are infinite series and Bernoulli numbers, modular equations and elliptic functions, as well as walk-on parts for Euler's constant, Jacobi's polynomials and finally, the mock theta functions on which

Ramanujan (left); and Hardy



"He looks rather ill," Hardy wrote on seeing this photo, "but he looks all over the genius he was."

For Hardy, the collaboration with the Indian was "the one truly romantic incident of my life".

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Ramanujan was working till his death. But the parade of mathematical erudition is not intimidating to the lay reader: Kanigel skilfully weaves basic explanations into his narrative. Even better are the anecdotes that capture his genius. Attending his first Cambridge lectures and asked by a professor whether he wanted to add anything, Ramanujan went to the blackboard and wrote results the professor had not yet proved—and which he could not have known before. In one celebrated episode, Hardy visited his protege in a nursing home and said that the licence number of the cab he had come in—1729—was 'rather a dull number'. Ramanujan reacted instantly: "No, Hardy. It is the smallest number expressible as the sum of two cubes in two different ways."

Ramanujan was convinced, from reading the lines on his palm, that he would die before 35. Auto-suggestion in such a religious man could well have had a powerful effect: Ramanujan always saw mathematics as a gift, bestowed upon him by his family deity, the goddess Namagiri. Kanigel is more inclined to blame his fatal illness on loneliness, neglect and poor eating habits in an unfamiliar climate. Tuberculosis was common amongst Indian students in England, and Ramanujan, obsessed by his work, simply wasted away. The enormity of this preventible loss is unbearably moving.

Ramanujan had, in Hardy's words, 'an invincible originality', but he was still heir to an ancient Indian mathematical tradition that has given the world its mis-named 'Arabic' numerals, that invented the zero in the 2nd century B.C., and that flowered in the theorems of Aryabhatta in the 5th century A.D., Brahmagupta in the 7th, and Bhaskara in the 12th. Yet he would never have approached the eminence he did were it not for his discovery by Hardy. Poverty and colonialism are partly to blame. It took an Englishman, J.B.S. Haldane, to observe that 'if Ramanujan's work had been recognised in India as early as in England, he might never have emigrated'—and might have lived longer to achieve even greater heights.

Then again, perhaps not. Kanigel also recounts how a Hindu astrologer, without knowing whose horoscope he was reading, described it as that of a famous man who would die young, at the peak of his fame. Perhaps Ramanujan gave the world as much of the Infinite as the gods would allow him to grasp. ■

Terror and Tribulations

The despair and dignity of an elusive legend brought alive

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Phoolan: queen of the valley

By DOM MORAES

INDIA'S BANDIT QUEEN
by MALA SEN
Indus
Pages: 254
Price: Rs 95

THE ravines of the Chambal valley are romantic in appearance: great welts of dusty grass, rockstrewn and desolate. For centuries, they have been inhabited by nomads and dacoits; though the dacoits call themselves *baghis* or fugitives. I have met several, including a retired one who said in a melodramatic manner: "I have killed so many people in the Chambal that here, even the rocks cry out for revenge!"

It could be said that theirs is a melodramatic occupation; in reality it is squalid and extremely tiring, and is caused by tragic circumstances. But many have become legendary figures: Man Singh, Tehsildar Singh, Pan Singh, Malkhan Singh, and most of all, Phoolan Devi, the woman dacoit who is in prison in Gwalior, and about whom Mala Sen has now written a book.

Sen: moving acount

Mala Sen's book is a very well-written, well-researched one. She has shunned the temptation to make a romantic figure of Phoolan with scrupulous care and intelligence. Phoolan Devi's life is a history of accident, insult, and humiliation, a direct result of the inequalities of Indian society when you are born poor. Phoolan has been raped, beaten, and cheated, and is still in jail because the Government has not kept its word to release her after a nominal sentence.

Sen picked up Phoolan Devi's story early on, followed it up, and has developed a friendship with this interesting, mentally wounded, and therefore peculiar young woman and her family. The story of this friendship is of some fascination; so are the events in Phoolan's life, as narrated by Sen. The trouble is there are varying versions of these events. Phoolan Devi herself has offered the world different accounts of what happened to her. In these difficult circumstances, Sen has done some excellent work. What emerges, and what needed to emerge, is that the Chambal dacoits, unlike Robin Hood and his merry men, are neither romantic, nor very loveable, nor very hateable, but belong to the ranks of the broken, beaten, and defeated, and are products of an outdated medieval social system. ■

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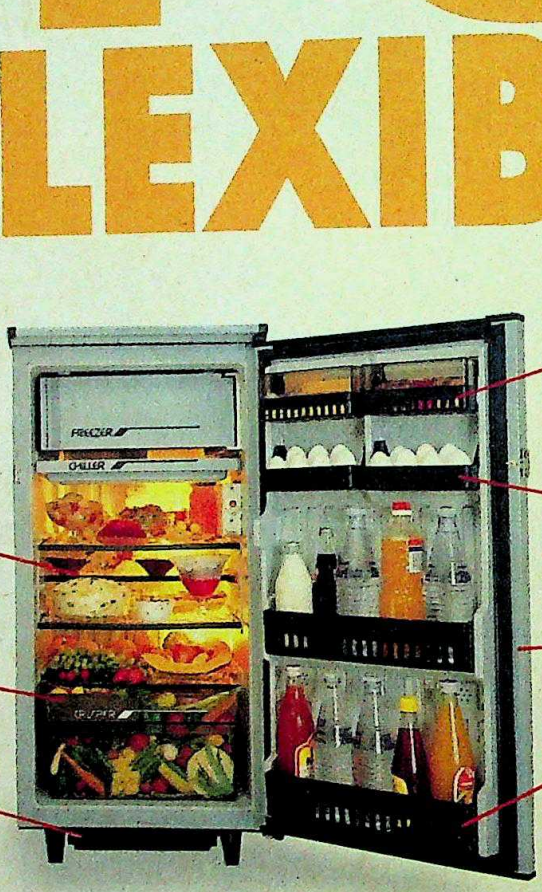

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Video

REGARDING HENRY (Director: Mike Nichols; Starring: Harrison Ford, Annette Bening, Mikki Allen). Henry Turner (Ford) is a successful yuppie lawyer, until he becomes the victim of a shoot-out which damages his brain. A re-examination of his life with his wife (Bening) and daughter (Allen) follows. Doesn't sustain the viewer's interest. Watchable only for Ford's performance.

ROBIN HOOD—PRINCE OF THIEVES (Director: Kevin Reynolds; Starring: Kevin Costner, Alan Rickman, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio). Costner plays the medieval English 'prince of thieves'. The pace barely allows to allow Robin Hood to court Marian (Mastrantonio). Entertaining.

RETURN TO THE BLUE LAGOON (Director: William A. Graham; Starring: Milla Jovovich and Brian Krause). The sequel to *Blue Lagoon* lacks the poetic sensuality of the original. Even the exotic locale cannot make up for the lack of story.

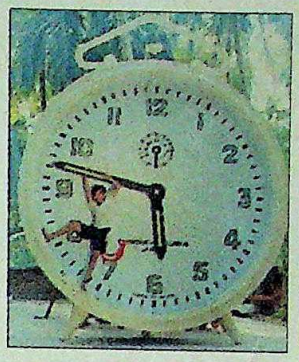
Books

MODERN WOMEN'S SHORT STORIES (Edited by Susan Hill; Penguin; Rs 250). A fine collection of post-war British women writers exploring contemporary aspects of the feminine psyche.

MY WEEK WAS IN JAPE (By Clive James; Picador; Rs 112). The third part of the memoirs of TV and literary critic Clive James. Funny as always, James records his foray into literary hackwork and the hazards of love.

Movies

7th INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL, TRIVANDRUM. On view were 75 children's films from 24 countries. Though mostly pedestrian fare, there was a handful of interesting films. Top of the charts was the Austrian film, *Holidays with Sylvester*, which bagged the Golden Elephant award. A brilliantly-told tale of how Cathy, 7, transforms the life of a scruffy 76-year-old astronomer and their unique bond.



Also drawing the crowds was the Indian entry, *Abhayam* (Shelter), in Malayalam. It is the story of a child who tries to escape parental pressure and monotony by running away to his grandfathers' home in a remote village. The journey turns out to be one of self-discovery.

LAMHE (Directed by Yash Chopra; Starring: Sridevi, Anil Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Waheeda Rehman, Deepak Malhotra; Music by Shiv Hari). Lovingly photographed and with the kind of music that lingers in the mind long afterwards. Yet, the film is aeons away from *Kabhi Kabhi* or *Silsila*. The magic's just not there although the story of an older man in love with a much younger girl is relatively unusual. Kapoor without his signature moustache looks incomplete, almost a Jeetendra clone. The biggest disappointment is model Deepak Malhotra whose macho image gets drowned in a thin voice. Sridevi, of course, is her usual bubbly self.

Food

MINT NITE (Chocolates from the Taj). With a reputation for the smoothest chocolates in the country, Taj has failed to make the grade with Mint Nite. Slightly lumpy and crystalline, they are a disappointment. They are nevertheless the closest the country has got to the popular mint chocolate After Eight. The price: Rs 30 a box.

MAYROSE (Master & Patel Chambers, Bombay). For years, this humble Irani restaurant has stoutly resisted change. But now, the eatery that had catered to the college crowd from St Xavier's and played host to the now-famous like Shabana Azmi, model Rachel Reuben and Sunil Gavaskar, is going in for a new avatar. The upmarket Chinese restaurant stands apart for its unusual range of vegetarian fare; beans as starters and eggplant in garlic sauce being two that are strongly recommended. On an average, a meal for two costs Rs 300.

Art

BRUSH STROKES FROM BENGAL (Presented by Artage at Rabindra Bhavan, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, November 22-29). The exhibition by painters of Bengal—some well known, others not so—is rewarding even though it's uneven.

DHIRAJ CHOUDHURY. '70s/'80s/'90s DRAWINGS (Galerie Romain Rolland, Alliance Francaise, New Delhi. November 27 to December 11). Anguish and joy. Exuberance and darkness. Choudhury with his energetic sweep and skilful lines has captured both the lightness of being and the menacing satyrs in the subconscious in his black and white drawings. A must.

SPIRITUALIST ART BY CHAMNAN TONG-UPAGARN (Genesis Art Gallery, Calcutta, November 29 to December 9). The young painter from Thailand who studied at Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, has some intriguing paintings which attempt to combine mythology with mysticism.

Music

FELA (By Fela Anikulapo Kuti; MIL; Rs 45). Squeezed between the Afro soul of Mannu Dabingo and Mory Kante's pop-rock is Kuti's socially-conscious voice. With two steaming themes, Kuti displays ethnic sinews on a framework that comes close to basic gospel.

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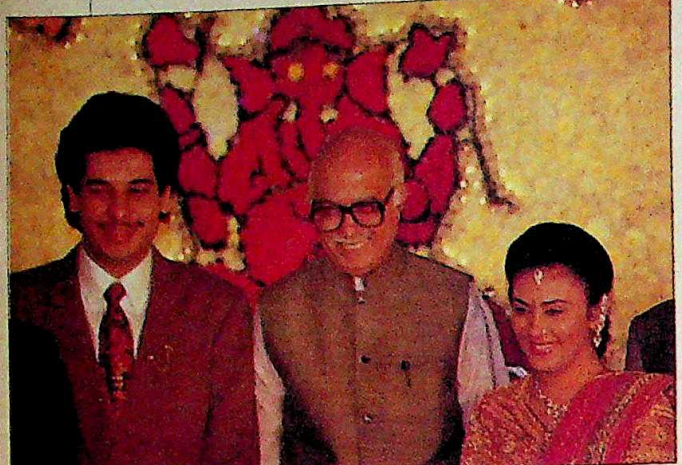
HEMANT PITHWA



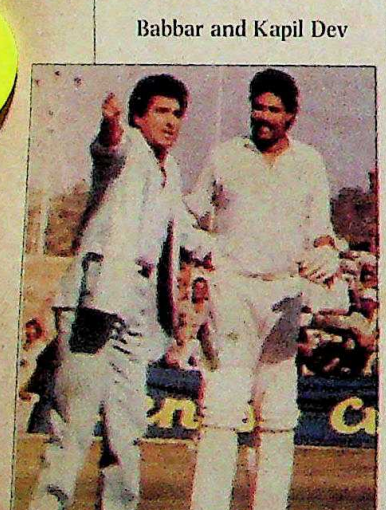
Topiwala, Advani, Deepika

Saffron Soiree

◆ The bride was in saffron, umm...red. The occasion: the reception of Sita...umm **Deepika Chikalia**, BJP MP, and her real-life Ram...umm **Hemant Topiwala**, the Tips and Toes giant. The guests: L.K. Advani, electronic epic-urean Ramanand Sagar and Rajesh Khanna. Said Deepika: "I don't want Hemant to be totally like Ram." From tip to toe, a wedding of epic proportions.

Sporting Cinema

◆ It isn't quite cricket. But all-rounder **Kapil Dev** is as comfortable being shot before the camera as he is with his shots on the cricket field. He has now graduated from doing commercials to making a brief appearance in Raj Babbar's latest film *Karmyoddha*. Kapil plays himself and comes in with his latest TV avatar of an anti-drug activist, to spread the "Say No" message. Said the cricketer after going through the rushes: "I didn't know I had such a deep voice." Quite an all-rounder that.

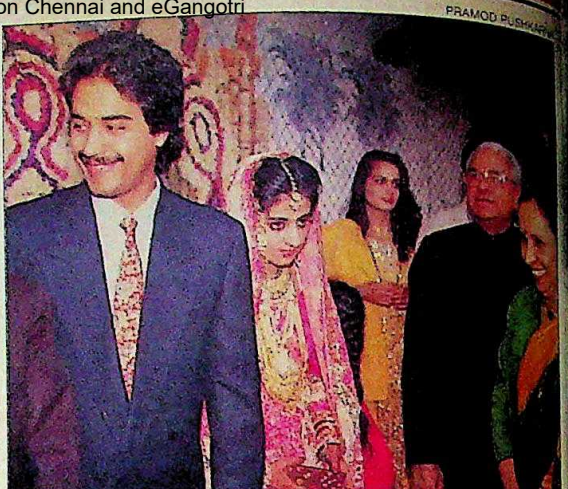


Babbar and Kapil Dev

Premier Passion

◆ The Pakistani tabloid press loved it. Splattered across its pages were the romantic peccadilloes of premier Nawaz Sharif and **Dilshad Khan**, actor Feroze Khan's stunning sister. Then Ambani-owned *Sunday Observer* front-paged her picture with the story. Dilshad wasn't amused. Said her lawyer, Muzaffar Baig: "It's a brazen lie. She's never even met Mr Sharif." He's expected to file a Rs 1-crore suit against *Observer* if it doesn't retract the story. But editor Pritish Nandy is firm: "No way. The story came from reliable sources." Watch this space.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Bishnoi, Renuka, Bhajan Lal

Moveable Feast

◆ Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal's constituency Mandi Adampur was all spruced up. The occasion? Elections? No. It was for the wedding of his son **Kuldeep Bishnoi**. The groom came to bride **Renuka's** house in a six-horse chariot. And the couple sat in front of a 3-D flourescent painting. The moveable feast included a guest list of 50,000 people. Apparently, the affair cost Rs 1 crore. But as a relative said: *"Chief minister hain. Ladkon ki shaadi roz thodi na hoti hai."*

Khan: beyond borders

It's Show Time, Folks

◆ **Honours usually come in singles. But for Amitabh Bachchan, who's never had a retrospective before, they are now an avalanche. Worldwind, rather. London: *Salute to Amitabh Bachchan* retrospective at the London Film Festival, no matter if *Deewar* becomes *I'll Die for Mama*; the prestigious Guardian Lecture; and a chat on the Terry Wogan show. Amsterdam, Damascus and Cairo: more retros. Says he, wryly: "Too many retros could mean it's pack-up time." Not yet, Mr Bachchan. Put your suitcase away.**

Cartoon by JAYANTO

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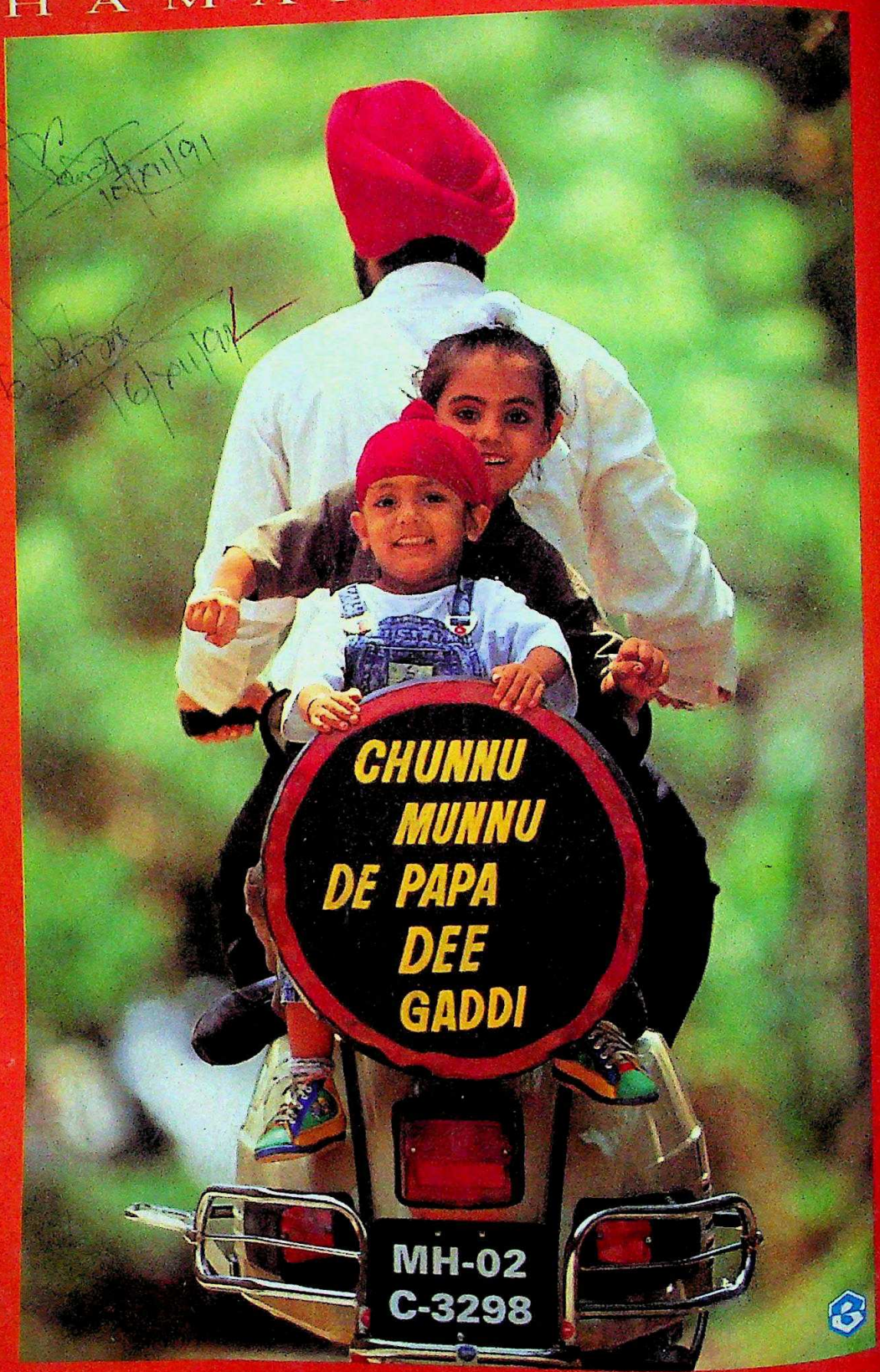
HAMARA BAJAJ



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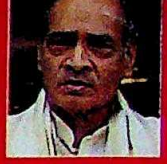
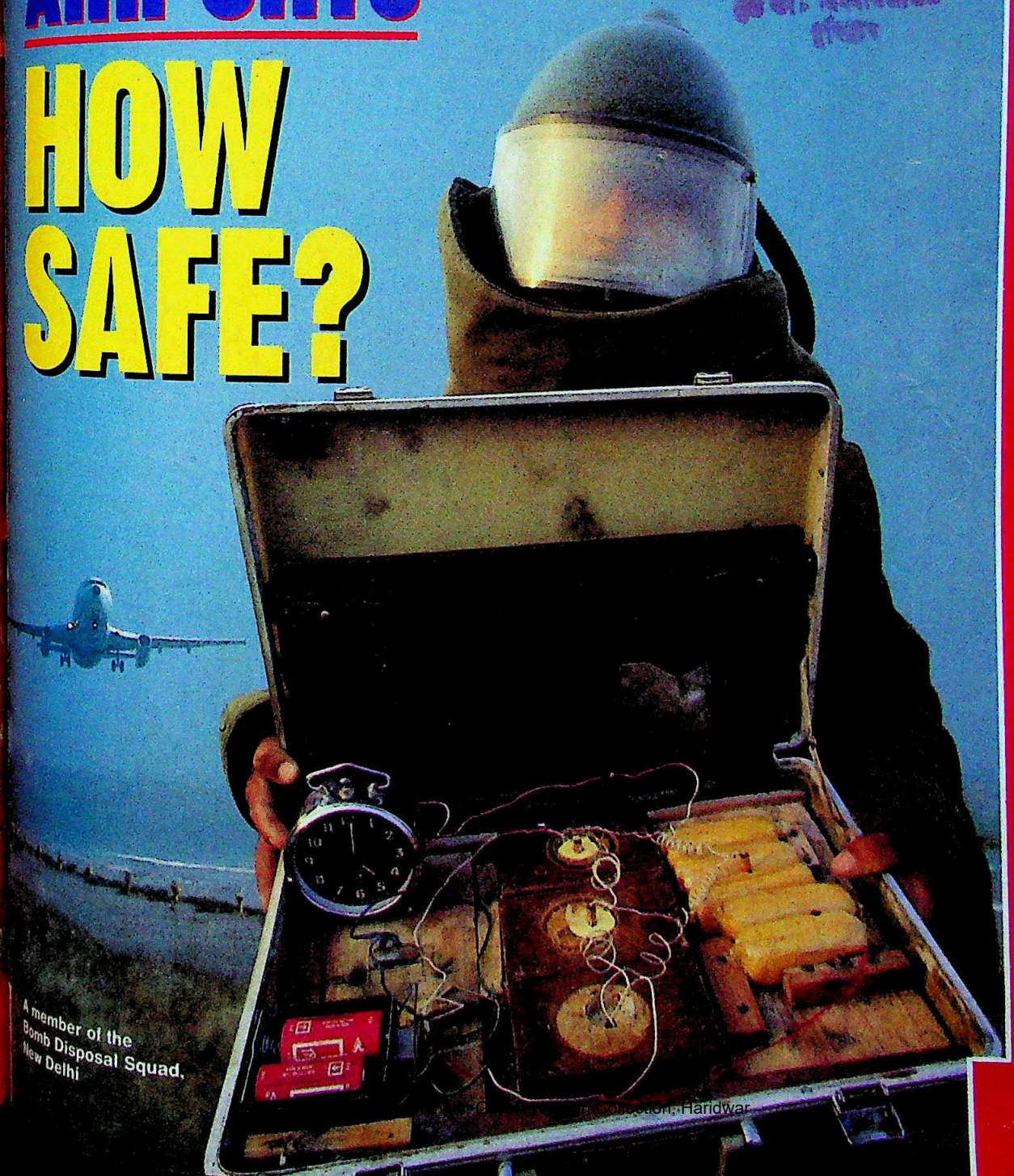
INDIA
TODAY
DECEMBER 31, 1991



RASIMHA RAO: GAINING STATURE
CRICKET: INDIA CRAWLS BACK
MANMOHAN SINGH INTERVIEW:
"NO SHORTCUTS AHEAD"

AIRPORTS
HOW SAFE?



A member of the Bomb Disposal Squad, New Delhi

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"A LEGEND WITH LEGEND"

INDIA'S FAVOURITE CAR TYRE

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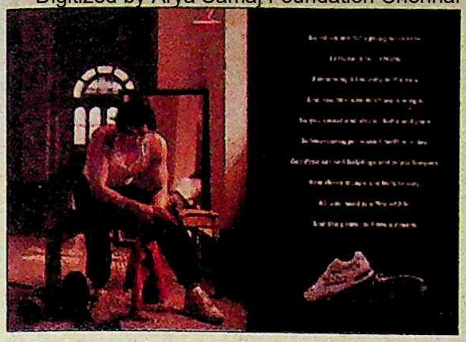


The award-winning advertisement; and the trophy

UP till now this space has normally been used to highlight editorial trials, tribulations and triumphs. This time, I would like to draw the reader's attention to an area which actually gives us our bread and butter—advertising. It may be interesting for you to know that it costs much more for us to produce a copy of INDIA TODAY *than we sell it for. In fact, if we were to sell a copy of the magazine without advertisements on a break-even basis, it would cost Rs 42 as against the present Rs 15.*

Besides, I firmly believe that the best way to ensure the editorial integrity and independence of a publication is for it to be financially strong and healthy. Dependence on government largesse or on a limited number of advertisers would make us particularly vulnerable to pressure. That is why INDIA TODAY *follows a strict policy of the separation of the two domains where the advertising department does not know what editorial material is being carried and vice versa. It has resulted in some awkward moments with advertisers, but we have survived. So, next time the advertisements seem excessive to you, remember they subsidise the cost of the magazine for you.*

ON the occasion of our 15th anniversary last year, we brought out The Best of INDIA TODAY. *At that time, we announced an award for the best advertisement in that particular issue. The award was a prize of Rs 5 lakh and a trophy. Its purpose was to encourage more creative advertisements and to show our appreciation of the close relationship which exists between advertising agencies and a publication. The award was won by Trikaya Grey for its advertisement for Power shoes. As Ravi Gupta, managing director of Trikaya Grey, says: "It is this public recognition that makes us reach for higher levels of excellence in advertising every time."*

The special anniversary issue received such an overwhelming response that it has now been decided to bring out a separate annual edition along similar lines. The best advertisement award will be continued for these special annual editions. Hopefully, this will contribute to further improving the already high standards of advertising in India.

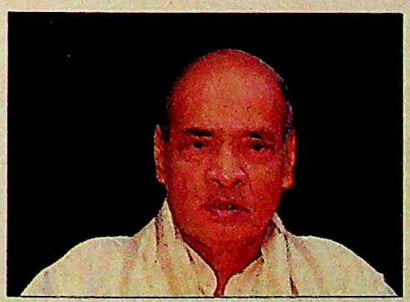
(Aroon Purie)

IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Airports: How Safe?

The bomb found on an Air India flight exposed a new threat, from operations personnel. With porous security and little accountability, flying has become risky.

COVER STORY 24



Gaining in Stature

By turning the tables on his rivals, Narasimha Rao has shown that even with a minority government, changes can be initiated. But the real test lies ahead.

SPECIAL FEATURE 38

On a Hot Streak

Although the Amritraj brothers have retired from centre-court, they are raking in millions and are on their way to becoming the Indian first family in California.

SPECIAL FEATURE 89

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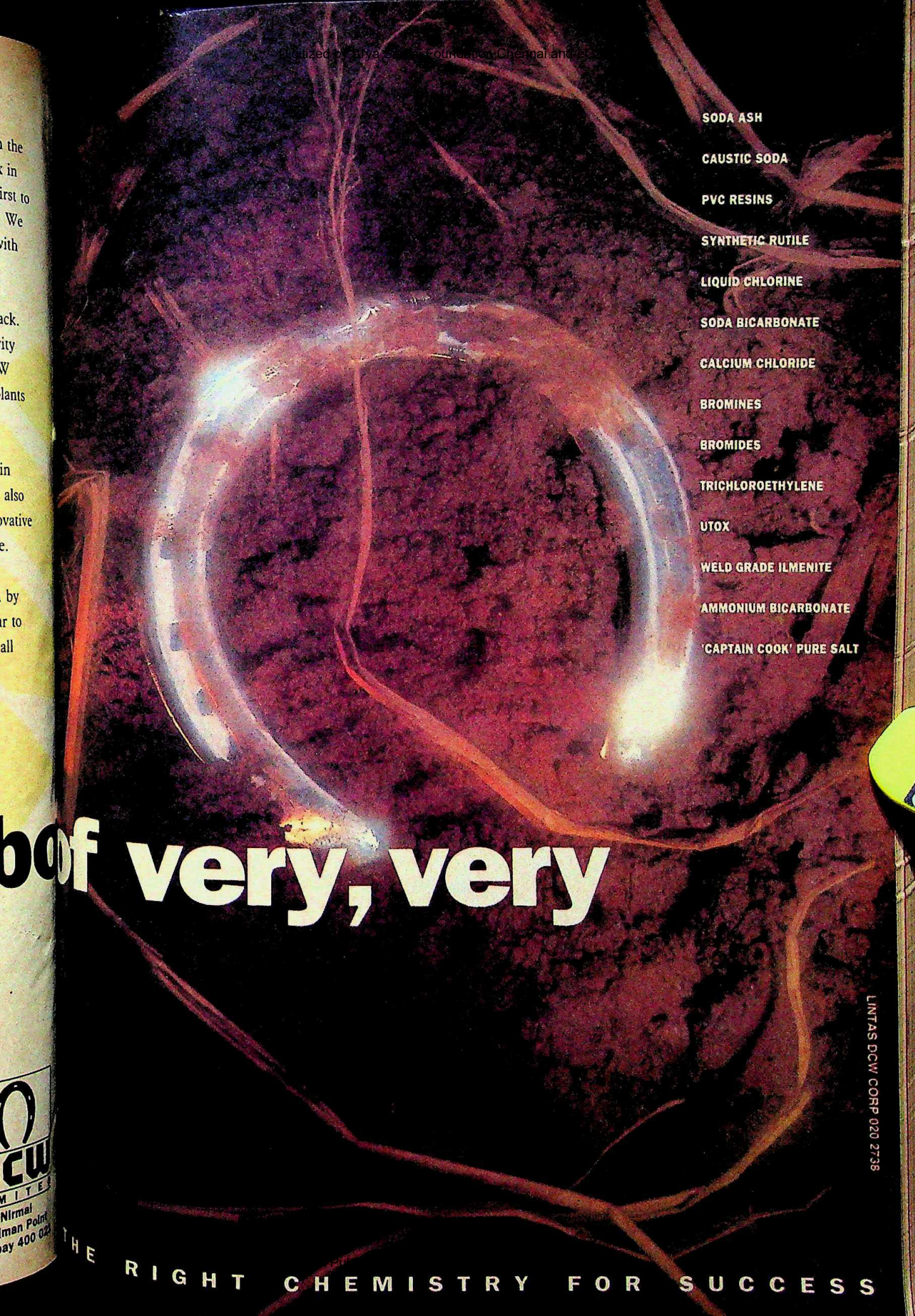

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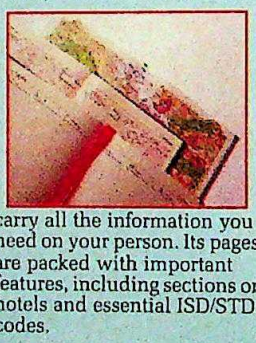

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CLEAR VISION

Contrary to your story ("Hindu Divided Family", November 30), the BJP has a clear national vision. It believes that the goals, values and institutions of our country should be determined by Hindu sentiment. In western democracies, these are determined by Christian sentiment because Christians form the majority there.

RAJENDRA N. GOUR
Lucknow

■ The *sangh parivar* tried to fashion a recurrent revivalist movement along the lines of the Islamic fundamentalist movement that has been successful throughout the world because of its ability to stir illiterate masses emotionally. But the parivar erred in ignoring the mind-set of Indians which is unsympathetic towards anything that is unduly violent or divisive.

GOPALAKRISHNAN IYER
Ramnagar

WISHING FOR A VIP MP

The preferential treatment extended to certain constituencies like Baramati ("Pawar Pocket Borough", November 30) makes every Indian voter wish that an important personality would contest from his region. It also highlights the fact that an area's development is directly related to the political clout of its representative.

BICHU MUTTATHARA
Trichur

■ At least Pawar and his family have helped in the development of their constituency. B. Shankaranand, who has been elected seven times from Chikodi in Karnataka, has not bothered about his constituency after winning the elections.

THAUSIF RAHEEL
Madras

SEPARATE DISTRICTS

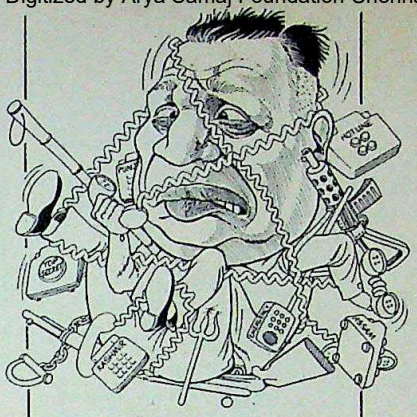
The report on the by-elections ("Star Strategy", November 30) stated that the home minister halted in Nanded in Aurangabad district. In fact, Nanded is a separate district. It does not fall under the jurisdiction of Aurangabad district.

JETENDRA LIKHITE
Nagpur

TOURIST UNFRIENDLY

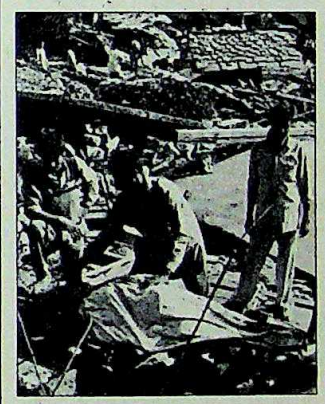
As tourists ("Big Plans Backfire", November 30), we feel that one prohibitive factor for prospective visitors to India is the visa fee. Another problem is the way tourists are treated once they arrive in India. While we met some wonderful people, we met as many who tried to overcharge us for everything only because we were foreigners.

SARA GRAVETT and DAVID WOOLLEY
Northampton, UK



S.B. Chavan's loyalty may be an asset to the prime minister but as far as the country is concerned, he is proving to be a liability we can ill afford.

RAJNEESH OJHA
New Delhi



Instead of providing relief to the earthquake victims, the Uttar Pradesh Government was busy acquiring land and doing Bhoomi Pujan at Ayodhya.

VINEETA SRIVASTAVA
Kanpur

MERIT NOT CASTE

I was appalled to read about the so-called quota system in the selection of the cricket team to Australia ("Selectors' Slip", November 30). Perhaps a day will come when most berths in the team are reserved: 19 per cent for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 50 per cent for the other backward castes, and the rest for the general category.

R. SRINATH
Madras

DISTORTED PERCEPTION

The review ("Janus Jiddu", November 30) is based on the assumption that whatever is stated is true. Actually, both devotees and enemies of an individual make poor biographers since their minds inevitably distort facts. The book represents the attempt of a conditioned mind, at the level of a Hollywood gossip columnist, trying to interpret an unconditioned consciousness that lived in contact with the unfathomable unknown. Krishnamurti never accepted social morality. His consciousness followed an intrinsic morality. To such a consciousness, no act in itself is either right or wrong. The state of mind in which it is performed determines whether it is moral. Anyone who knew him personally could not but have noticed that his consciousness was free and dimensionally different from that of ordinary human beings. If Radha Rajagopal failed to notice this, it is more her personal tragedy than that of Krishnamurti. I do not blame her because too much proximity to a mountain does tend to obscure its beauty from one's vision.

P. KRISHNA
Krishnamurti Foundation India
Varanasi

GOOD ASSESSMENT

Kudos for your well-researched cover story ("Cinema Turns Sexy", November 15). Aside from delving deeply into the nuances of sexual scenes of contemporary cinema, the article is an indicator that our

VOLUME XVI NUMBER 24: FOR THE FORTNIGHT DECEMBER 16 - 31, 1991

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society is going the permissive way. Are our censors turning a bit voyeuristic too?

J.S. MURTHY
Jabalpur

■ Blaming the south was certainly naive. One must not forget all those films, like *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, which have not been dubbed from the south. The question is why are southern films dubbed into Hindi? The fault lies with the producers, distributors and financiers. For sex and vulgarity know no state, language or region.

SOBHA BABU
Rajkot

NOT BASED ON REALITY

Kuldip Nayar's comments in his review ("Half Truths", November 15) have revealed certain gaps in his knowledge of ground realities in the Kashmir Valley. It was G.M. Shah not G.M. Syed who was installed as chief minister of J&K in July 1984.

V.K. RAJAGOPALAN
Bangalore

GIVE HIM A CHANCE

The classical reaction of medical academe in response to Dr Gupta's controversial blood therapy for rheumatoid arthritis ("Radical Recipe", October 31) is understandable. Persecution by the establishment of one era proved to be a re... scientific spinner in another. In the la... '60s. Dr J.C. Holt, the chief of radiothera... in Perth, Australia, was humiliated an... stripped of his licence. This was for h... efforts at treating cancer patients with rad... frequency-hyperthermia. Radio frequency... hyperthermia is used for the treatment o... cancer all over the world now, including... Australia and India. It is the Japanese an... Americans who took up the idea an... directed it back to the clinic. The glory an... gain, which were to be Australia's, wer... bestowed elsewhere. Cancer patients how... ever lost 10 years in the process.

If Dr Gupta submits a well-documented... proposal and a protocol, the Indian Council... for Medical Research should assist him with... all available scientific tools either to accept... or reject his hypothesis. Medical academe... on the other hand, on the basis of his clinical... success, may assist him in designing a... controlled clinical trial, if one is not already... in place, before the idea is picked up by some... other predator. Newton's apple, that shook... the intellectuals, was only provoked by his... gut feeling. He had no hard scientific data... for support before it dropped. If we are to... learn from history, this may be one lesson... we cannot afford to pass up.

DR KAMAL MALAKER
Harvard Medical School
Boston, US

Most films are shot in the Wenlock Downs area, homeland of the Toda tribe. It is tragic the way film-making is eroding their culture and disturbing their life-style.

TARUN CHHABRA
Ootacamund

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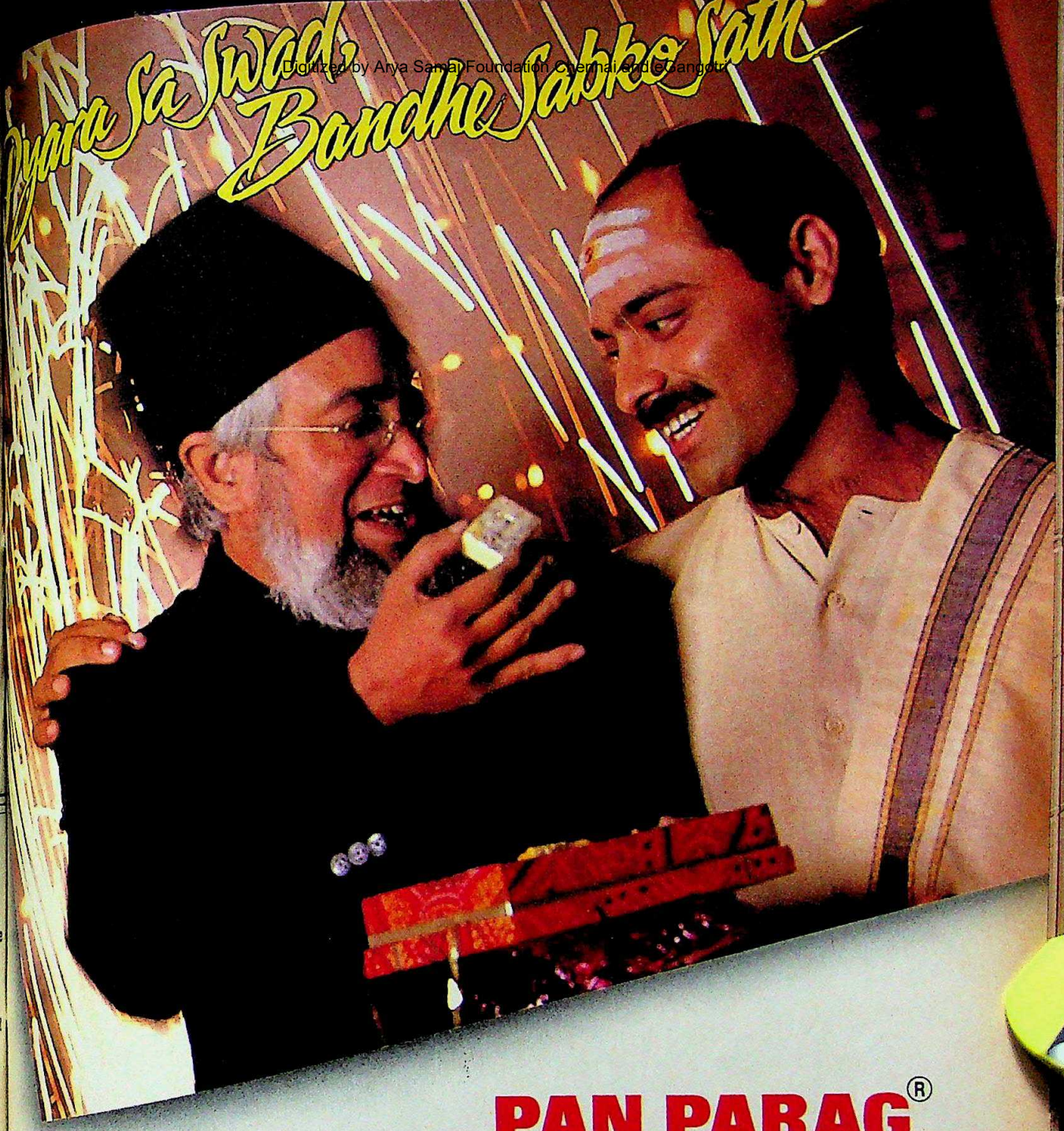

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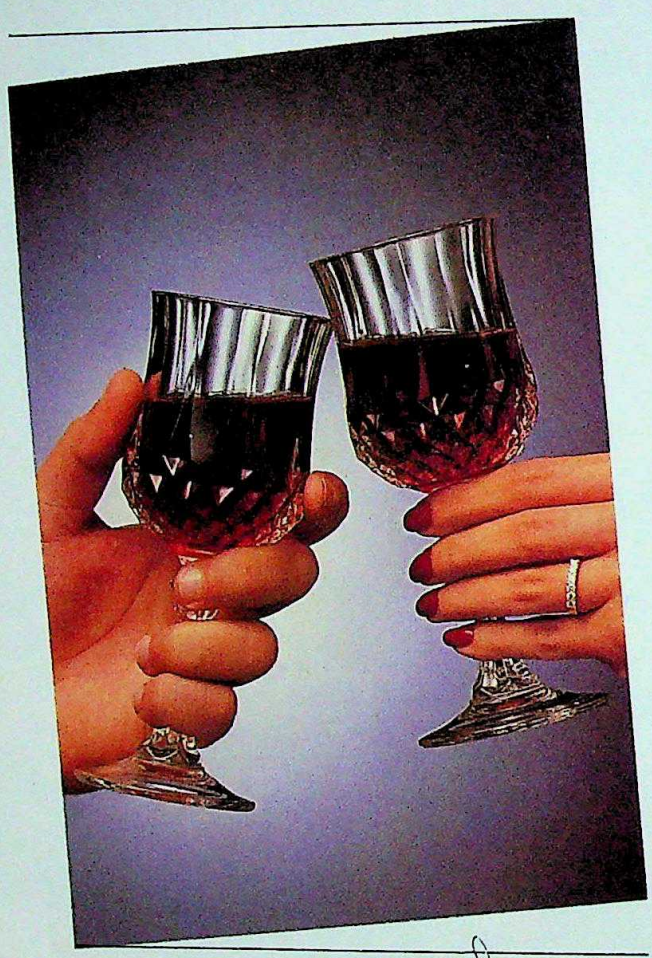

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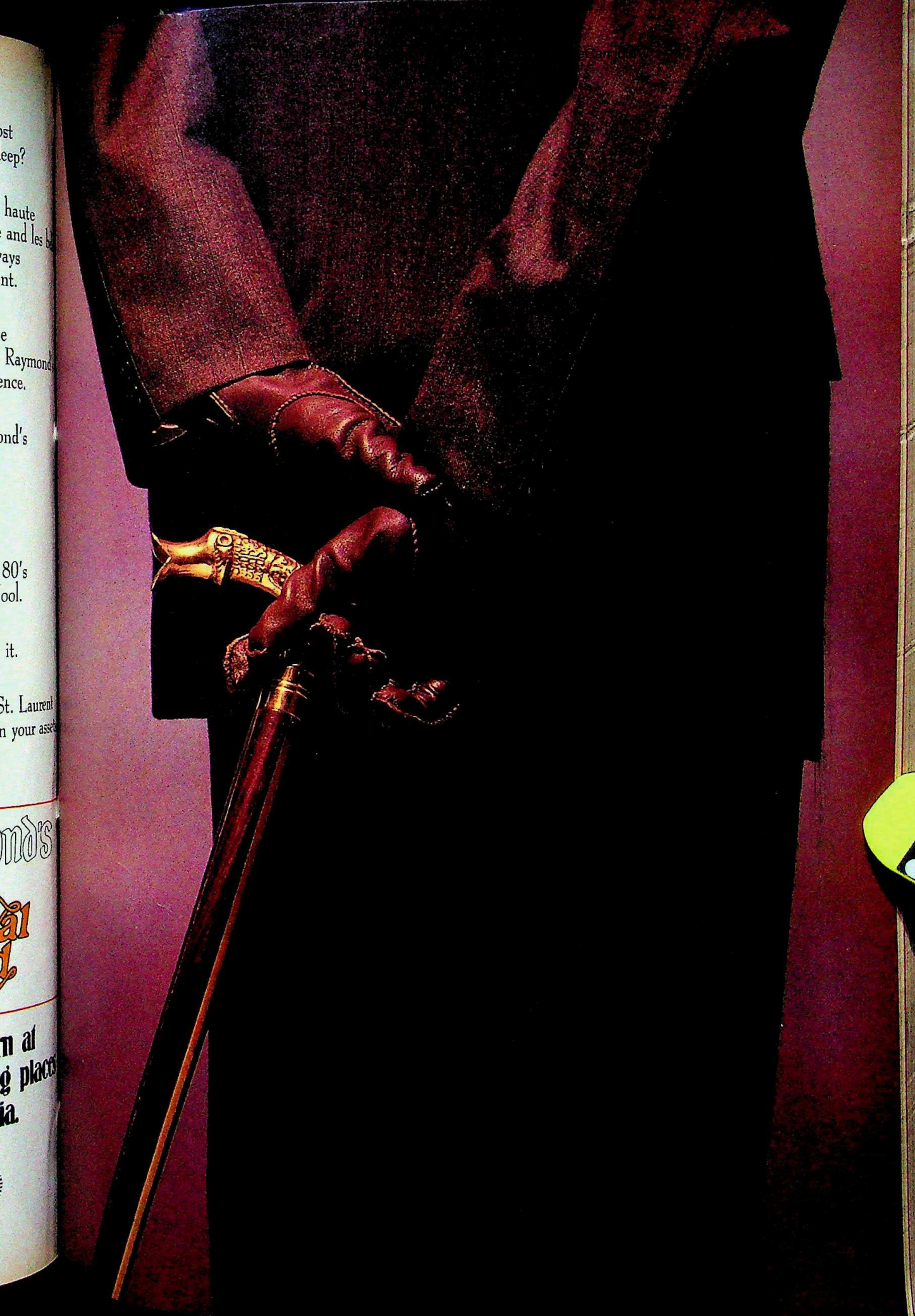

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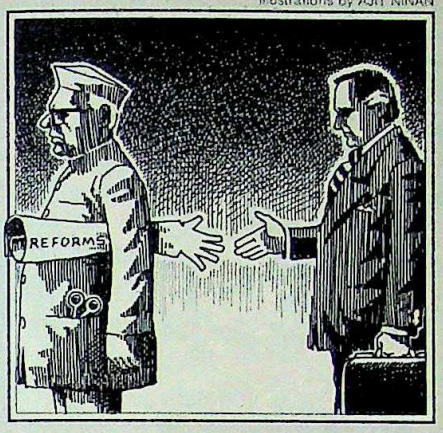
Destructive Mind-Set

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN



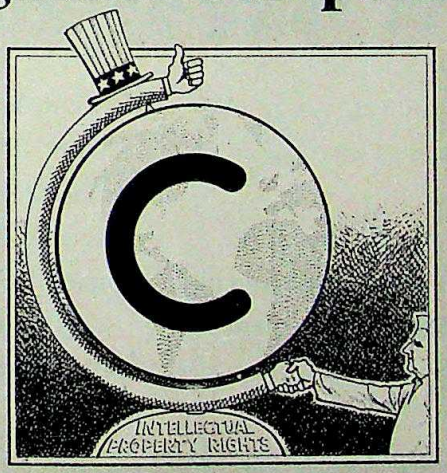
YOU would think that with all the official glitz and hoop-la accompanying the Government's New Economic Policy, businessmen—those pariahs of yesteryear to be shunned and ideologically ridiculed as rapacious boxwallahs—would finally be *in*. After all, it is in their creative entrepreneurial talents and risk-taking that the Government is now supposed to be reposing its faith in the arduous task of creating new wealth, investments and opportunities in the brave new world that economic helmsman Manmohan Singh is trying to usher in. But old habits and the Nehruvian hangover of disdain for business die hard.

Or how else to explain the insultingly cavalier treatment of a delegation of Indian businessmen who were encouraged by New Delhi to travel to Venezuela on the occasion of the G-15 meeting ostensibly to interact with their own and foreign governments on issues of trade and commerce? Indian officials kept the businessmen at arm's length right from the start. Despite a half-empty aircraft on which government officials and journalists travelled to Caracas, the captains of Indian industry flew separately.

With the Indian Government having done practically nothing to pave the ground for the interaction these businessmen were expecting, most of them wound up wondering just what they were doing there. Contrast this with the attitude of other governments attending the summit. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed took a commercial flight into Caracas and travelled with his country's business delegation. The Indonesians displayed a similar solicitude, and the Nigerians sent a business group even though their head of state couldn't attend.

Perhaps no other country has been able to demonstrate better than Japan that in the game of economic growth and the quest for prosperity, government and business must work hand-in-glove in complementary roles. The relationship between MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry) and Japan's industrialists is a spectacular example of the supercompany approach to growth and development. The Indian Government must realise that no amount of deregulation will produce desirable results unless it sheds its hypocritical anti-business mind-set and openly acknowledges the importance of industrialists and businessmen as equal partners in progress.

Pragmatic Compulsions



THE Special 301 "investigation" of India by the US, the outcome of which will determine how liberal or punitive Washington is going to be in granting access to American markets for certain Indian goods, is really in the nature of a reprieve. While Washington's trade investigators attempt to figure out whether New Delhi's tariff and non-tariff barriers and export subsidies give unfair advantage to Indian exports, New Delhi will have the time to mull over the real issue that rankles Uncle Sam: the running bilateral dispute over patents, more commonly described as intellectual property rights (IPRS).

The pressure on India to recognise and respect multinational patent regulations as embodied in the Paris Convention—especially in the area of bulk drug manufacturing, foods and chemicals—has been relentless. The argument is that these companies spend billions of dollars on research and development to produce new technologies and any country simply copying them without paying royalties or adequate protection is really stealing "property".

India does not dispute the fact that this copying is occurring. But rather it posits a rich vs poor argument: bowing to such pressure would send the cost of essential drugs skyrocketing domestically as well as force India to import more of them from multinationals and thereby perpetuate their monopolies. The US—as Trade Representative Carla Hills indicated in Delhi—does not buy this line. The counter-arguments: there has been no demonstrable rise in prices or drug shortages in less developed countries which implement IPRS; respect for patents encourages direct foreign investment with export potential; and, in any case, more than 90 per cent of the drugs that fall into the essential category in India are not patented.

The Indian side has no further response. But obviously some compromise on this issue will be necessary in India's own interests. The GATT negotiations from which India hopes to benefit seem off to a new start after the US climbed down from its rigid position on European farm subsidies. And Washington is also looking favourably at India's request for entering the US service sector. In a world increasingly ruled by pragmatism, New Delhi would do well to rethink the patent issue and accommodate a compromise even if in a phased programme.

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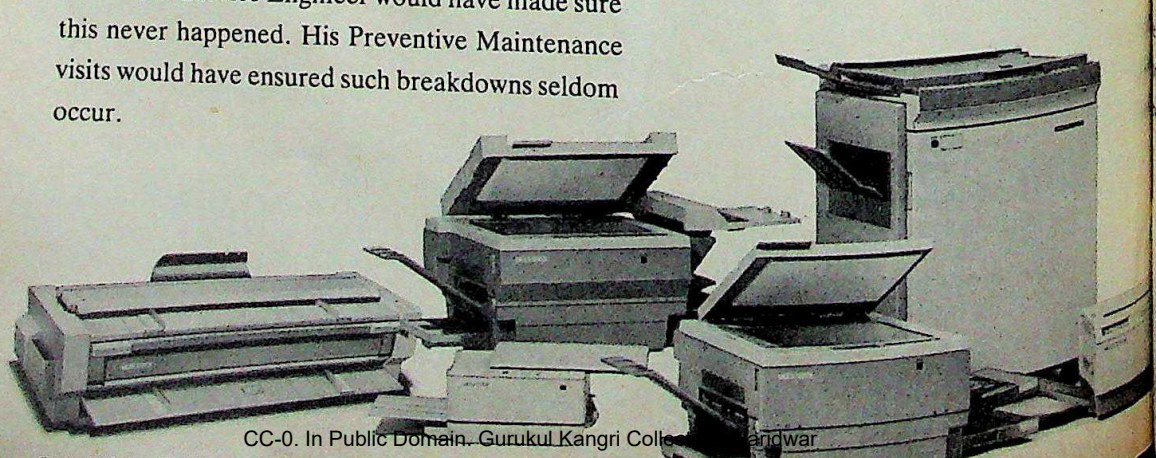

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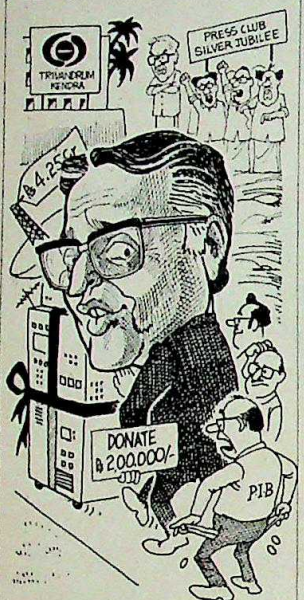
Costly Cover-up

● Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Ajit Kumar Panja has been in a tizzy lately. He recently allocated an imported Rs 4.25-crore transponder



earmarked for the Trivandrum Doordarshan Kendra to his native West Bengal. This would have allowed television to cover the whole of the southern state. So, when he later visited Kerala's capital, he faced the wrath of Chief Minister K. Karunakaran, local politicians and the press.

Anxious to placate them, Panja promised a Rs 5-lakh grant to the Trivandrum Press Club, now in its silver jubilee year. Unimpressed, the I&B secretary noted his disapproval on the file. He also suggested that the amount be reduced to Rs 2 lakh. The minister forwarded the file to the Press Information Bureau (PIB) which replied that it did not have the money for such extraordinary requests. Besides, what if the 538 other registered press clubs too demand similar favours?

Unfazed, the minister demanded the PIB do the needful since the Trivandrum Press Club does hold a diploma course in journalism, and it was therefore tantamount to helping a journalism institute. The lucky watering hole has already received the money!

Garrulous Gambit

● The prime minister's consensual approach has its pitfalls. Before he left for Venezuela, he met the opposition leaders to discuss some current problems, and spell out the Government's course of action at the G-15 meet.

The talk soon veered around to Bihar and, inevitably, electoral rigging. But Narasimha Rao would not be drawn into a controversy. Bihar, he said, had a lot in common with his home state—Andhra Pradesh. It had too many people and severe poverty despite substantial mineral resources.

Unimpressed by this circumlocution, an opposition leader cracked: "Only in these two states do people win elections by margins of

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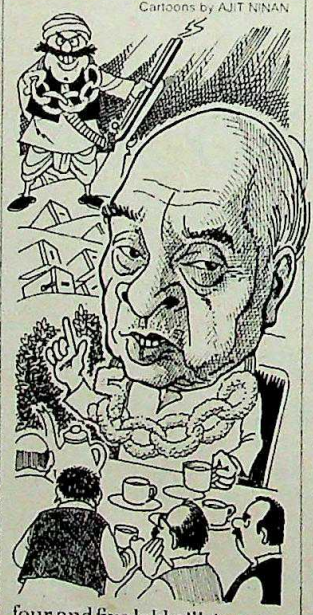
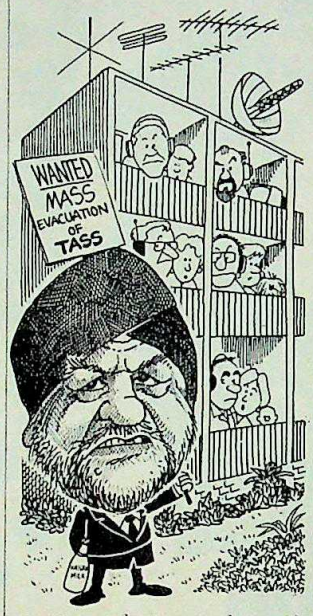


four and five lakhs!" Anyone for more tea, asked Rao.

In The Red

● Hard times might have hit the Soviet Union. But some of its correspondents in New Delhi seem equally badly off. The offices and residences of the eight Tass



correspondents are housed in a huge white building in Vasant Vihar, dubbed the Tass Mahal.

But recently the Soviet news agency got an eviction notice from the landlord. The reason: he was suddenly slapped with penal commercial rates by the municipal authorities. They had decided Tass Mahal was not being used for the residential purpose as stated.

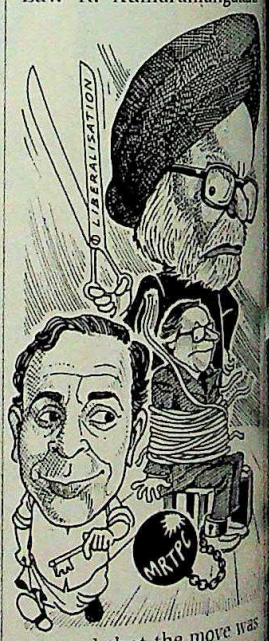
With the Soviets running out of funds, the scribes cannot afford alternative accommodation, never mind the rapacity of most Delhi landlords who want a year's rent up front. Moreover, they have all their sensitive communications equipment wired up in the Tass Mahal. Now, they are hoping the Indo-Soviet treaty will offer them a way to stay put.

Mixed Signals

● The left hand of the Government often does not know what the right does. But in this case it's unclear if one department is tripping up or aiding the other.

The Law Ministry mooted an increase in Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) members from eight to 10. It also demanded benches at Madras, Calcutta and Bombay to expedite redressal of grievances. Given the MRTPC's history of restricting the growth of large companies and curtailing competition, the finance minister saw red. His argument: this might send the wrong signals to industry.

Minister of State for Law R. Kumaramangalam



retorted that the move was to ensure consumer protection in the changed circumstances. And not to hamper liberalisation. But even today, the MRTPC, with a working strength of three, takes almost a year to dispose of a case, which hardly boosts consumer confidence. Meanwhile, the Cabinet Committee has yet to decide who wins.

TAIL PIECE

Dr Rakesh Mohan, economic adviser, on the old industrial policy: "Previously, Russi Mody had to seek permission even to go to the bathroom." Retorted Mody: "Visiting North Block, I first go to the bathroom. It's the most comfortable place there."

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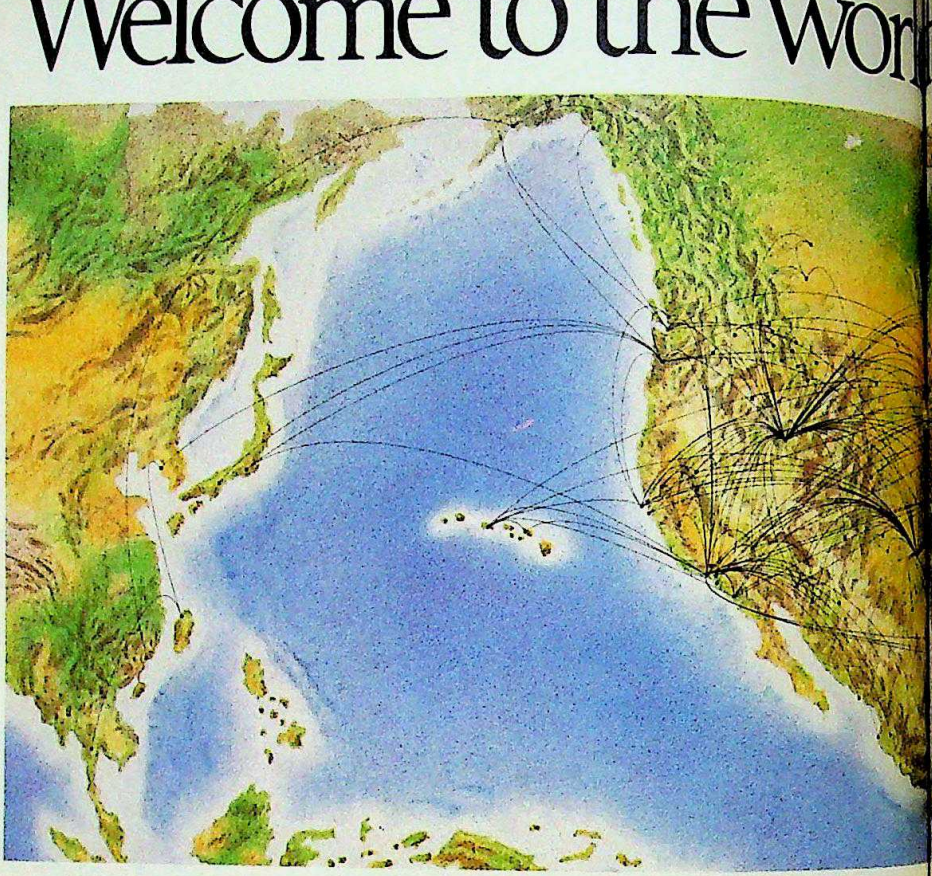

From left, Delta Flight Attendant Bonita Caringola, First Officer Timothy Therrell, Captain Larry Bacon and Flight Attendant Stephanie Allen.

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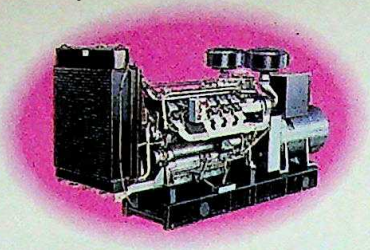

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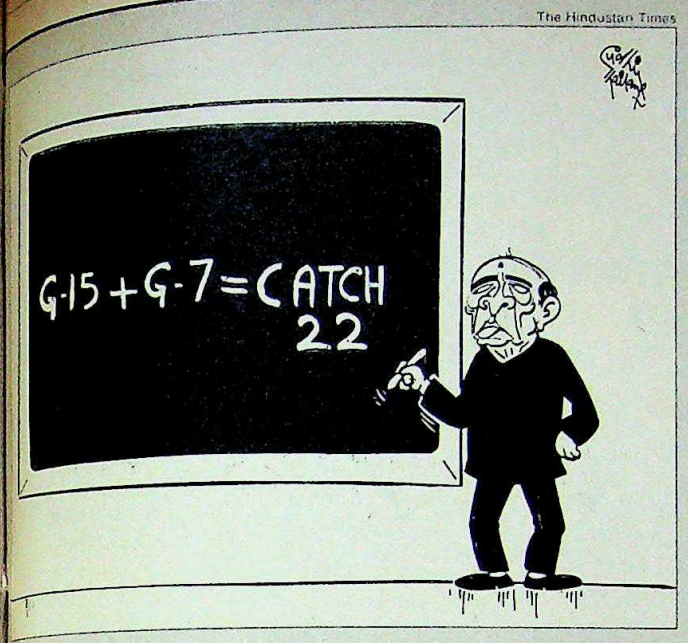

"Yes, for them (Sonia and her children) I will step down because Amethi is their constituency." ■ SATISH SHARMA in *Indian Express*

"One cannot lose what one does not have."
■ V.P. SINGH, on the Amethi loss, in *The Hindustan Times*

"There won't be elections. We have been completely colonised."
■ SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN in *The Independent*

"For most Congressmen, the BJP is worse than AIDS."
■ K.K. TEWARY in *The Telegraph*

"The silly experiment' must stop and V.P. Singh should take sanyas."
■ RAM DHAN in *The Hindustan Times*

"What can the police do to me? In my area, I am the law."
■ DULAR CHAND YADAV, politician close to Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, in *Deccan Chronicle*

"I cannot go around in a helicopter catching people with the satellite dish."
■ AJIT PANJA, commenting on the threat of cable TV

"Shot by a Khalistani terrorist. A martyr to the cause of a united India."
■ KHUSHWANT SINGH, on how he would like to die

"I am now like a piece of furniture." ■ T.N. SESHAN in *Sunday Pioneer*

"After doing so much for the country, we expected a little better treatment from our countrymen." ■ MOHAMMED AZHARUDDIN, on the allegation that Indian players had been bribed at Sharjah, in *Indian Express*

"It is impossible to be a career woman and a good wife. Any woman who says she is both is a liar."
■ SHAHNAZ HUSSAIN in *The Week*

"I don't fear old age but I am going to go grey with a fight."
■ SHARMILA TAGORE in *Savvy*

"Prostitution is a necessary evil and it shouldn't be banned."
■ ANU AGARWAL in *Stardust*

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Cartoons by JAYANTO

EDIBLE EVIDENCE

■ He had evidently bitten off more than he could chew. But it was a temptation he couldn't resist. At the end of a tedious day collecting ticket money from passengers, a bus-conductor with the Andhra Pradesh Transport Corporation did not think much of

dipping into the day's collection and taking a cut.

Whistling over the Rs40 he had just "made", he set about planning how he would blow it up. Until a ticket examiner boarded the bus and put a damper on his plans. Quickly, the embezzler crammed two notes into his mouth. The examiner, wise to these ways, tried to wrench them out. But the determined conductor bit his finger while hastily swallowing the Rs 30 morsel. Unfortunately, a Rs 10 note remained in his pocket. The examiner pounced on the incriminating evidence and the conductor was booked. Clearly, to be a successful embezzler you need either deft fingers or a big bite.

LITERATE WAYS

■ Festivals are normally the season for freebies. But this young IAS officer from Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district wanted none of the usual flasks and tea-sets. Instead, he issued strict instructions that anybody who wanted to give him gifts should restrict it to only slates and chalk.

The young bureaucrat had reason for this strange obsession. He'd been saddled with a brief to eradicate illiteracy from the district but wasn't given any funds to achieve it with.

So the innovative bureaucrat did the next best thing and decided to collect the necessary paraphernalia from the people themselves. And to make doubly sure that people took his instructions seriously, he said their favours would be given the go-by if they gave him anything else.

The strategy certainly is a well chalked out one: already, the bureaucrat's literacy mission is showing signs of success.

POT LUCK

■ If you're looking for the mythical pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, look no further. Head out, instead, for the small village of Kanvar in Karnataka and you may very well stumble upon a brilliant fortune lying under the nearest tree.

Last fortnight, a poor

woman had taken shelter from a raging storm under a tree in this village when her eyes alighted upon an ordinary looking earthen pot lying at her feet, half-buried in the ground.

Her curiosity aroused, she dug out the pot and with trembling fingers brushed off the mud from the lid. To her amazement, it was chock-a-block with gold coins. Authorities later claimed that the glittering treasure dated back to the Chola period.

While archaeologists still mull over the discovery, there've been many an excited villager thronging the vicinity, digging away furiously towards an elusive golden future.

IDOL INGENUITY

■ Criminal ingenuity knows no bounds. Last fortnight, two spirited youths from Sardhana near Meerut proved they could outspook the rest when they came up with a Ramsay Brothers' plot to enrich themselves.

Playing on the gullibility of women driven by superstition, the duo entered a house clutching an idol. They spun horrific tales about how the house was haunted and convinced the petrified women that unless the idol was appeased their house would not be purged of its other-worldly occupants. The women fell for

the ghost talk, prostrated before the idol and burned incense sticks. Meantime, the conmen, having rid the house of ghosts and goodies, made a neat exit. To the incredulous women, all that remained of the ghostly encounter was the smell of incense that hung cloyingly in the air.

PRIZE OFFERINGS

■ Devotees of Goddess Lakshmi should consider a change of heart. The new god of wealth, it seems, is Lord Ganesh. And it pays to switch allegiance to him.

At the Siddhivinayak temple dedicated to the elephant-headed god in Tum-

kur, Karnataka, the temple trust has come up with a novel way of keeping devotees happy. Instead of bestowing conventional blessings, it hands out cars and scooters annually. The only pre-requisite is, you have to be a philanthropist.

Every year on the god's birth anniversary, huge donations are collected by the trust. Then, on the day of the idol's immersion, a list of local philanthropists is made out and a lucky draw follows. The prize: a sparkling new vehicle, no less. The portly Ganapati, astride his divine rodent, evidently knows how to keep pace with his hi-tech devotees.

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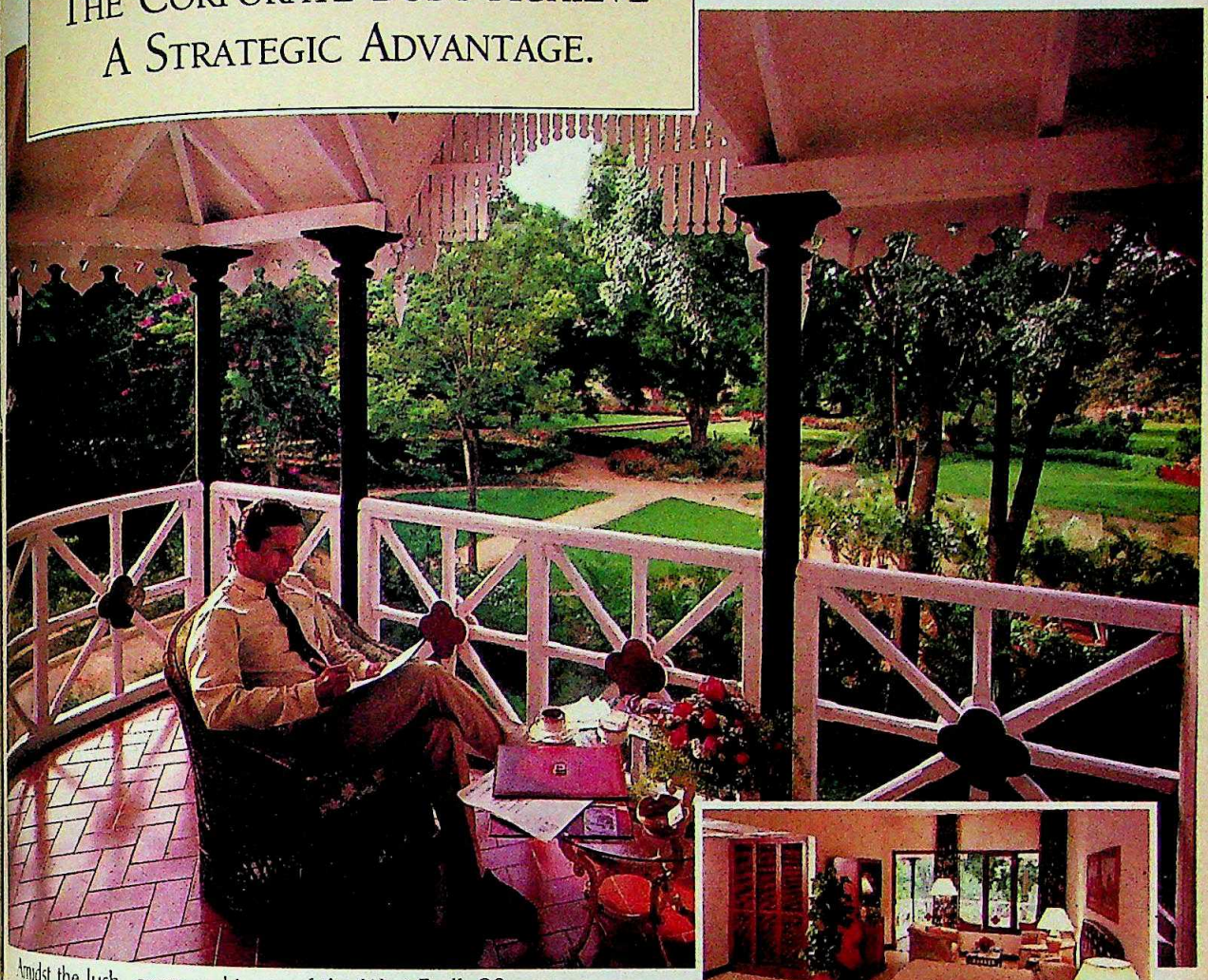
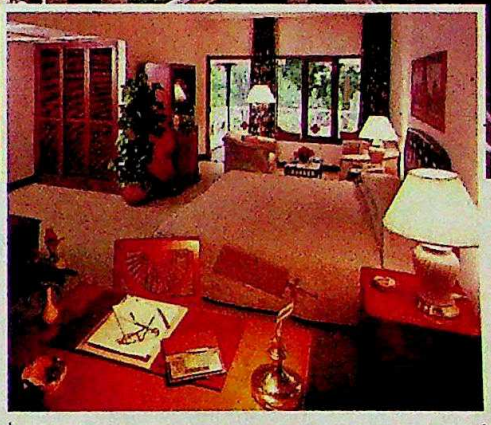
How The West End Helps The Corporate Body Achieve A Strategic Advantage.





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ON THE NEWSSTANDS FROM JAN. 1992

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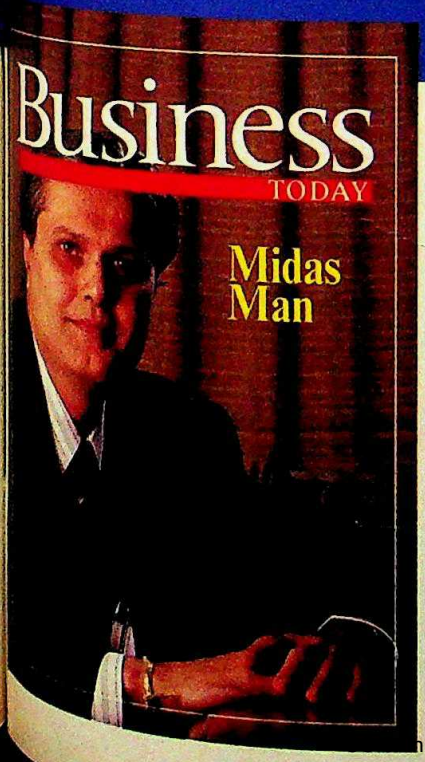

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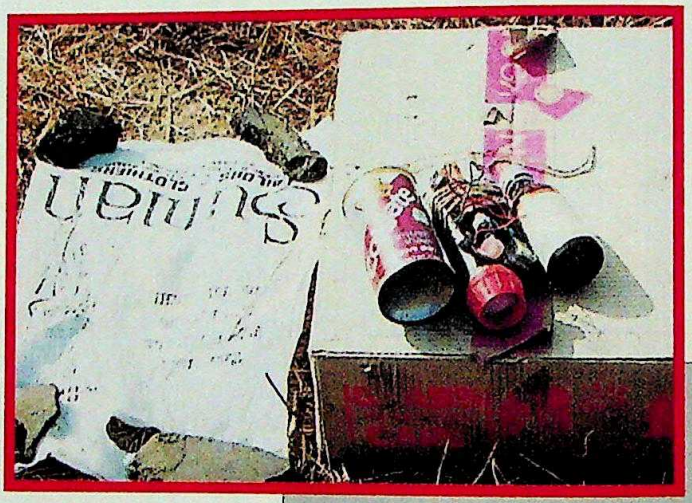
AIRPORTS

HOW SAFE?

The aviation security system is vulnerable to threats from within.

By RAJ CHENGAPPA
with W.P.S. SIDHU and
ANIRUDHYA MITRA



The home-made crude fire bomb (left): lethal weapon

FOR a fire-bomb, it looked innocuous. An aerosol shaving cream can filled with domestic cooking gas. A medicine bottle full of petrol. An old torch with a battery, detonator and tiny radio transmitter fastened to it by wires. All wrapped in a plastic shopping bag and hidden on a rung of an aircraft catering trolley.

Yet, the device was capable of wreaking havoc. For if Air India Flight 111 to New York had taken off from New Delhi that Sunday morning with the bomb in its kitchen bay, it could have exploded, triggering a major conflagration aboard the Boeing 747. Apart from severely damaging the control systems of the aircraft, it could also have blown a hole through its fuselage. And in all probability, the 398 passengers and 22 crew members travelling on the aircraft would have met with a gruesome end.

If a major air disaster was averted on December 1, it was not because of the country's much-vaunted aviation security system. For, the fire-bomb was smuggled in through what were supposed to be tamper-proof catering trolleys. It had even been loaded into the aircraft kitchen bay. And would have gone unnoticed had not the alleged saboteur fumbled in his attempt to put the device in the oven so that it would explode when it was switched on during flight. As Civil Aviation Minister Madhavrao Scindia says: "It was just providential that the bomb was discovered."

When Civil Aviation Ministry officials probed the incident, they began to uncover alarming security lapses:

► The alleged saboteur, Balvinder Singh Nigah, was a catering officer in the Government-owned Chef Air and early this year had even been cleared to handle VIP flights including that of the prime minister's.

► Chef Air was to have an additional security officer to oversee the loading of food. On that particular day, no such officer was present despite the fact that there was a high-alert following intelligence reports of subversive activities.

► Utter chaos broke out among the various security

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gencies after the bomb was discovered on aircraft. Air Traffic Control, which ould have been the first to be given details the incident, was reportedly informed er 30 minutes had lapsed.

According to security procedures, the craft had to be towed to an isolated bay mediately. This was done only an hour r jeopardising at least four other aircraft ked on the apron that morning.

Admits Scindia: "It's a serious, unacptable breach of security. We are not going hide behind excuses. A tremendous ke-up in our security system is required." at the minister meant business was apent as heads, including senior ones, gan to roll. The regional director of Air ia was asked to proceed on leave till his irement which is three months away. A ior Chef Air catering officer and a secuy manager of Air India were suspended.

Meanwhile, Chef Air was ordered to stop all its flight categ operations to the two national carriers till its security was vamped. Indian Airlines was told to review its entire categ arrangements and suspend business with those flight kitchens having dubious credentials. And apart from a detailed vestigation to find out who else was to blame, the ministry dered a thorough review of the entire security procedures.

That was timely. For what the latest episode exposed was how dangerously lopsided the nation's aviation security system was. As S. Kanungo, secretary, Civil Aviation, points out: "What's most worrying is that currently our security is geared to deal with threats from the outside, like passengers or visitors. But as this incident shows, the threat is now from within our own organisations as well."

SECURITY TASK

Screening:

★ 20 million passengers at 86 airports every year.

★ 60 million suitcases checked-in annually.

★ 40 million food packets.

Most of the stringent security measures to check sabotage by passengers were adopted after the Kanishka crash caused by a bomb explosion killing all the 329 people on board on June 23, 1985. Among the steps taken to beef up security: Setting up bomb disposal squads at major Indian airports. Individual verification of all checked-in baggage. X-ray screening of hand-luggage. And a compulsory 24 to 36 hours' cooling-off period for all cargo booked on flights to prevent sabotage, using time bombs.

These measures were in keeping with world-wide aviation trends in the '80s which saw sabotage as the key threat to aircraft security. The spate of hijackings during the '70s began to recede after strict hand-baggage and body checks made smuggling weapons inside the aircraft difficult. From 82 cases in 1971, hijacking incidents had dropped to 30 in 1981.

However, there has been a dramatic rise in bombs or other sabotage devices being planted on board aircraft. In the past five years, 1,500 people have been killed in seven incidents of bombs blowing up aircraft. In India, before the Kanishka crash, 30 people died when a bomb was planted in a suitcase at Madras's Meenambakkam Airport in 1984. And this May, a bomb exploded outside the Indira Gandhi International Airport terminal, damaging a section of the building.

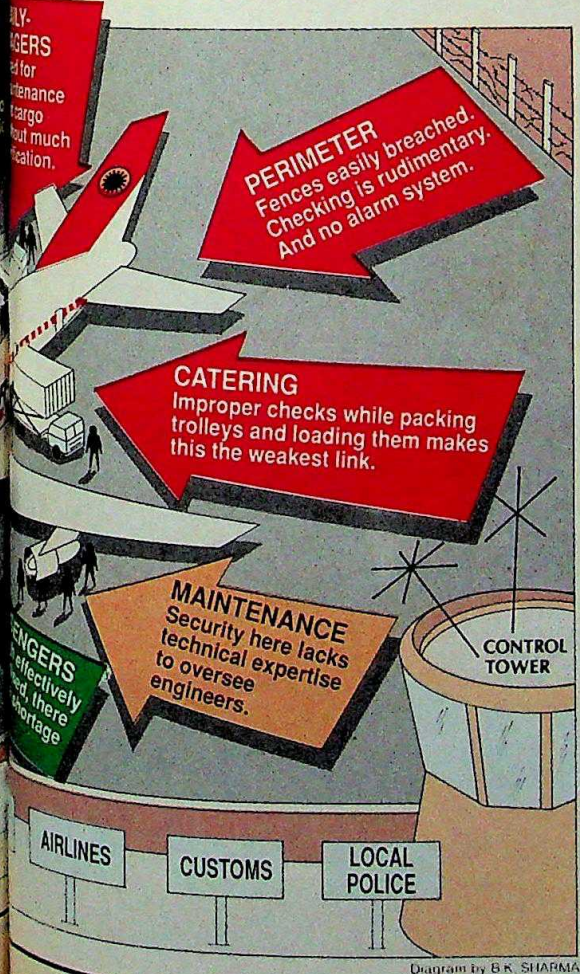

Diagram by B.K. SHARMA

SIPRA DAS

Balvinder Singh Nigah: suspected saboteur

But, the December 1 incident aboard the Emperor Akbar, was the most serious breach of security since the Kanishka crash. It exposed just how vulnerable the entire system was to a threat from a fanatic or madman among the one lakh people or more directly involved in dealing with air traffic at various airports across the country. It brought to light just how much confusion exists among the various organisations dealing with the security of the airports.

More than anything else, it begged answers to many questions. Do the 86 airports in India have adequate security

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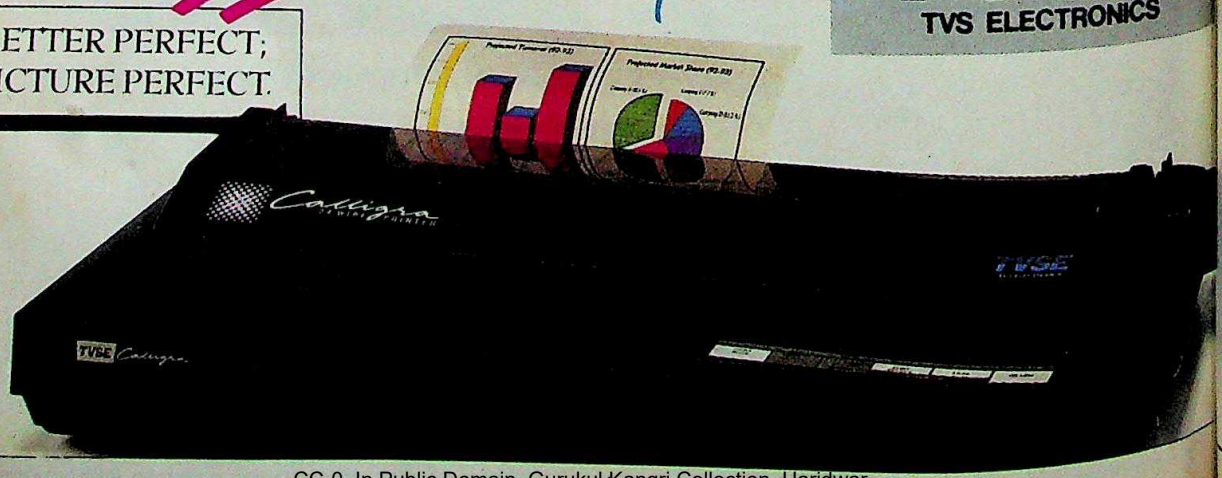

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measures to check the 20 million passengers who travel every year on almost 1.5 lakh flights flown by the two national airlines? Is the security system geared to screen bombs that may be planted in any of the 60 million suitcases and parcels that are flown annually? Or for that matter in the 40 million food packets every year? Does it have the capacity to constantly scrutinise the backgrounds of almost one lakh aviation personnel who have access to critical areas in these airports? In short, how safe are the country's airports? The disturbing answer: not very. Here's why:

MAIN PROBLEM

- ★ **Six different agencies dealing with security.**
- ★ **High alert procedures ignored.**
- ★ **No chain of command.**

CONFUSION CONFOUNDED

WHO'S really in charge of aviation security? It is a surprisingly difficult question to answer. By law, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) oversees aviation security but does not have the manpower to do so. The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) is only an advisory body and merely issues instructions and guidelines. The international and national airport authorities are responsible for security, but depend on other agencies or the police to enforce it.

That's not all. The local police are in charge of hand-baggage checks and frisking passengers but are not answerable to the airport authority. The airlines have their own security staff to check maintenance bays and cargo areas who are not accountable to the police. The flight caterers hire private security to supervise operations and they are not responsible to the airlines. The result: unending confusion.

That was evident when the bomb was discovered on Air India Flight 111. For almost half an hour, no one knew who was to take charge. Said a senior aviation official in exasperation: "It is not clear who is responsible for what or where one's jurisdiction ends." Even Scindia acknowledges that the multiplicity of organisations makes "confusion even more confounded". Worse, it makes security easier to breach.

In Madras recently, airport authorities apprehended an 18-year-old boy found loitering in Bay 28—a prohibited area near the runaway. Since they had no powers to arrest him, the authorities let him go with a warning! The incident sparked off a discussion on pinpointing responsibility but ended inconclusively with charges being traded.

The lack of a chain of command and accountability makes the entire security system pregnable. For instance, the BCAS had asked all airports to go on a high alert in September following intelligence reports. They repeated that warning in November. High alert procedures meant doubling of security at every stage including providing extra security staff to accompany the trolleys. But as the latest incident shows, that rule was flouted. And a senior airline official admitted they were unaware of the red alert.

Suggestions for a unified force for aviation security has

Victims of the 1985 Kanishka air-crash caused by an on-board bomb: history of lapses

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always bombed for several reasons: law and order is a state subject and so individual states insist that the airport be controlled by its own police force. Apart from that it would be prohibitively expensive to establish an independent unit. So, most of the agencies are content to have senior state police officers on deputation as their security chiefs.

Only now is the Civil Aviation Ministry trying to establish an informal line of command. They are talking of having an apex organisation with the chiefs of the various security agencies sitting in. That may sort out some of the confusion. But it still does not solve the basic problem: no accountability.

The other way to do is to strengthen the DGCA and make it as powerful as the US's Federal Aviation Authority which has all security agencies reporting to it.

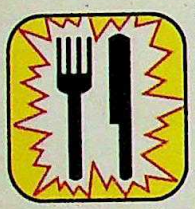
MOST EXPOSED

★ **Seals on food trolleys can easily be tampered with.**

★ **Cursory frisking of employees.**

★ **No double checks by airlines.**

CATERING A SABOTAGE



MULTIPLICITY of security agencies is only one of the problems. Over a dozen agencies have access to the apron when an aircraft is readied for take-off. There are 10 people from catering, six maintenance technicians, two garbage cleaners, eight cargo loaders, three duty officers, three assistants to refuel the aircraft—in all at least 40 people to service a flight.

Probably the most vulnerable link in the whole airport security chain is catering. In Delhi alone, around 25,000 casseroles—each capable of carrying the Air India type of bomb—are prepared in five kitchens every day. As V.K.A. Menon, general manager, Oberoi Flight Services, says: "Checking each of the 300 to 400 trays for a Jumbo flight is impossible."

Normally, the kitchen's sole concern is to see that the food is not poisoned. The emphasis is not on sabotage. Hence, the trolleys are checked only after they are loaded. They are then sealed with the caterer's own seal. But these paper seals are grossly inadequate. Confesses a senior manager at one of the kitchens: "The seal is an eyewash. I can open a sealed trolley without breaking the seal and do whatever I like."

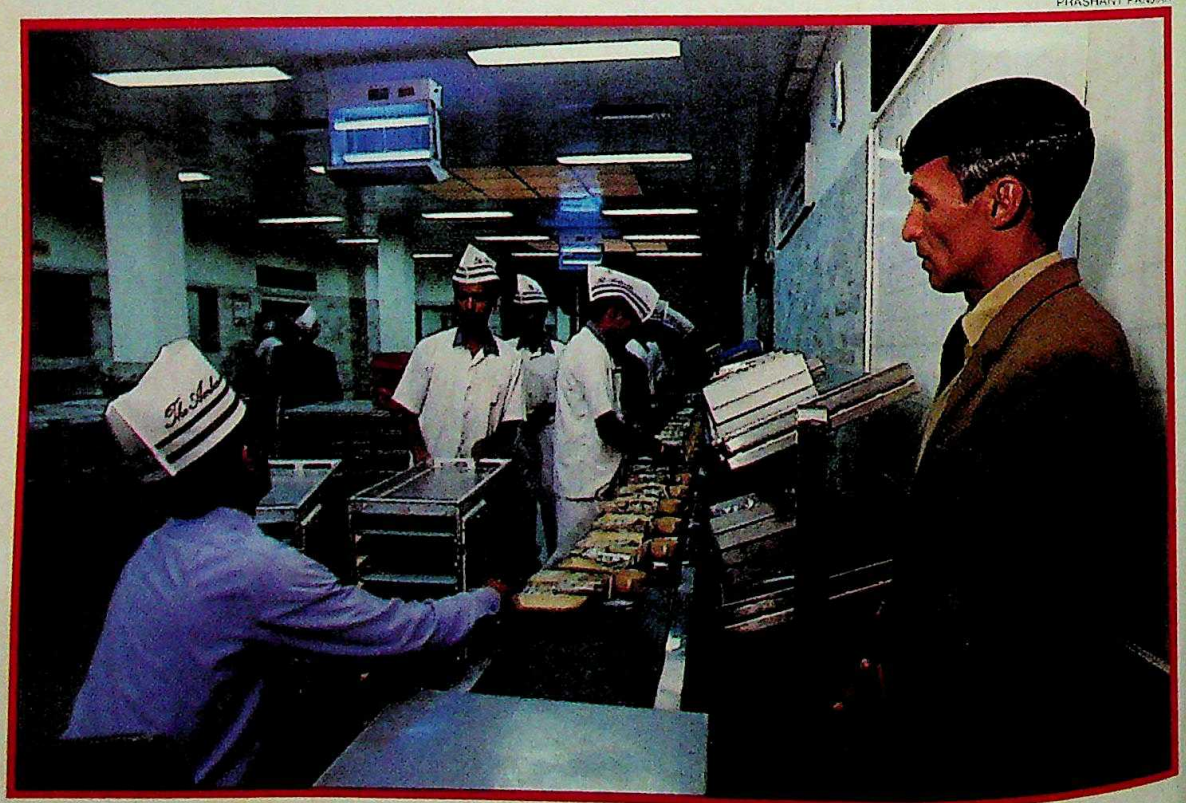
Representatives of some airlines are also stationed at the kitchen to check the trolley and put their own seal. The sealed trolleys are then loaded onto the trucks and locked. The convoy drives non-stop to the airport, where the airport security at the perimeter checks the manifest, but rarely the truck. At the aircraft, the staff are frisked by the airport police before they enter the aircraft. Here the airline catering staff break the seal. The entire loading and unloading operation takes about 30 minutes.

All that, if the system works. But as the Delhi incident showed, catering security especially in Chef Air where Nigah worked was like a sieve. Among the more serious problems:

► The private security cursorily frisked workers. Result: Nigah could smuggle in components for his device.

► The pre-setting carts were checked by the catering officer—Nigah—and were not counter-checked by the security supervisor or guard, who simply put the paper seal

PRASHANT PANJIAR



One of the five flight kitchens at Delhi: lax security has been recently beefed up

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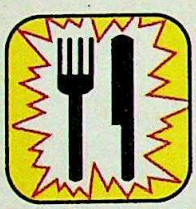

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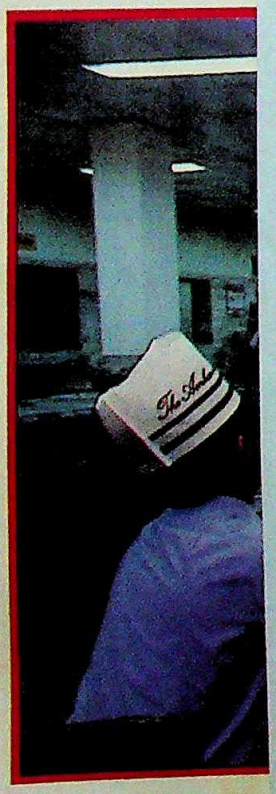

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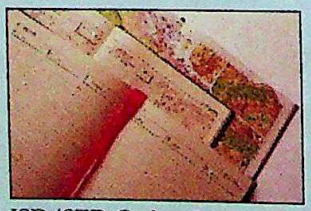

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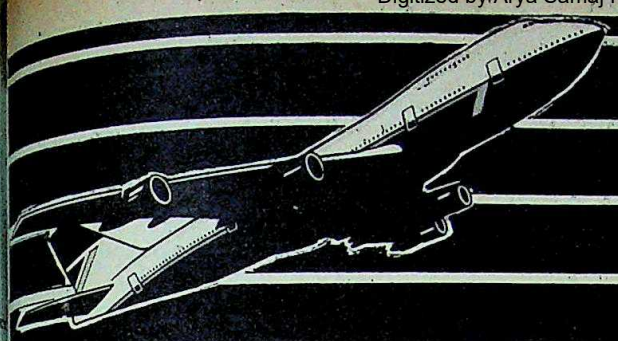

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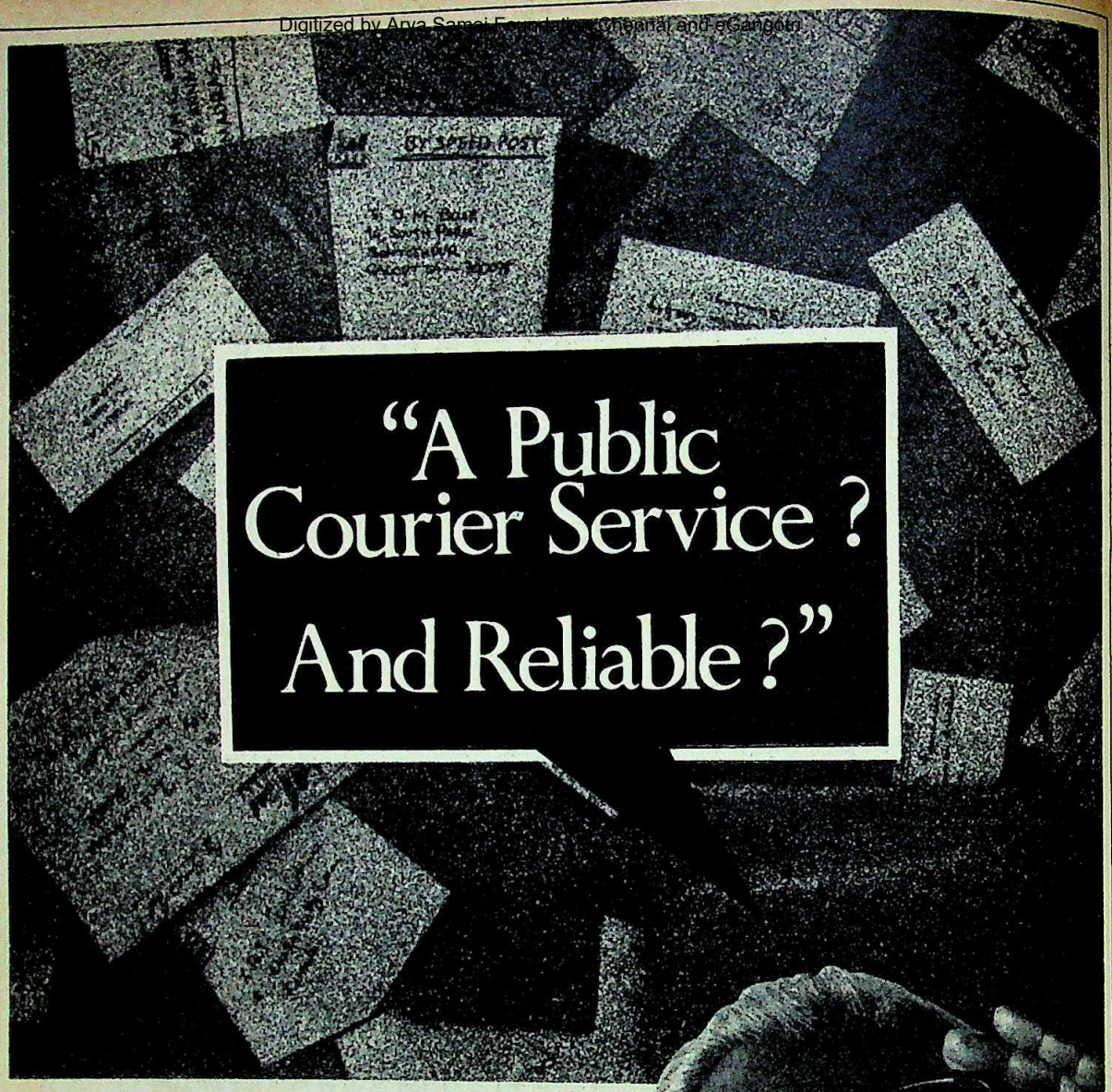

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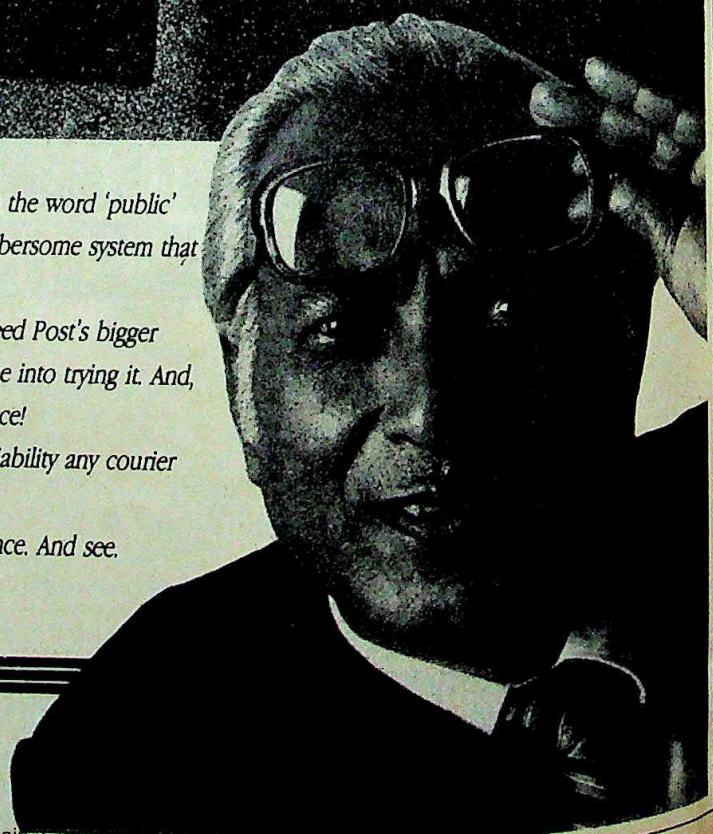

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on the trolley, which anyway had to be signed by Nigah.

Although it was close to the end of Nigah's duty time, he insisted on going to the aircraft to supervise loading. And though his senior, Z.A. Khan objected, Nigah, who had a pass for the tarmac, went anyway. No one could stop him.

Other flight caterers like Ambassador and the Oberois do have far more stringent security checks. And now even Chef Air plans to revamp its procedures and set up its own security department. Frisking has been made compulsory for staff. And Air India also plans to double-check with its own personnel, who will put their own tamper-proof seals.

Yet these changes have not come into effect. And on December 8, just days after the new system was passed, a surprise check on an Indian Airlines flight bound for Ahmedabad found that the catering trolley was loaded without the supervision of two security personnel assigned for the duty. The airlines had still to learn their lessons.

POLICING WOES

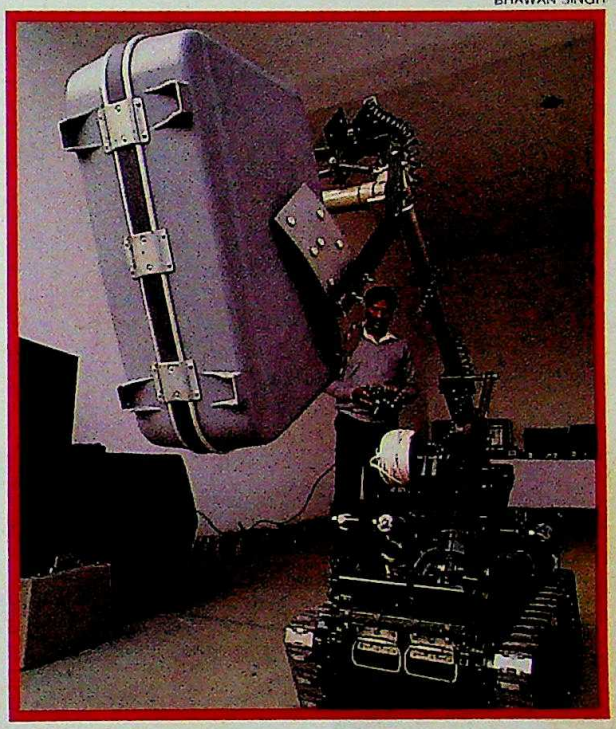
★ **Out of 1,200 dummy runs, in eight, officers got in with weapons.**

★ **Intruders common in security zones.**

strain. When the BCAS carried out 1,200 dummy checks, in eight cases its officers got past airport security with dangerous weapons. The high lapse rate is worrying.

The airport police are also responsible for keeping intruders out and protecting the airport perimeters. But they are frequently thwarted by lack of facilities and equipment. At the Madras Airport International Terminal, police guard as many as 16 access points, with torch lights and mufflers. Not surprisingly, even a suitcase suspected to have a time bomb and placed in the "cooling pit" was stolen. In Patna, there are no generators and if the power fails, the police stand by helplessly. At Bombay airport, several slums actually intrude into the security zones. And

BHAWAN SINGH

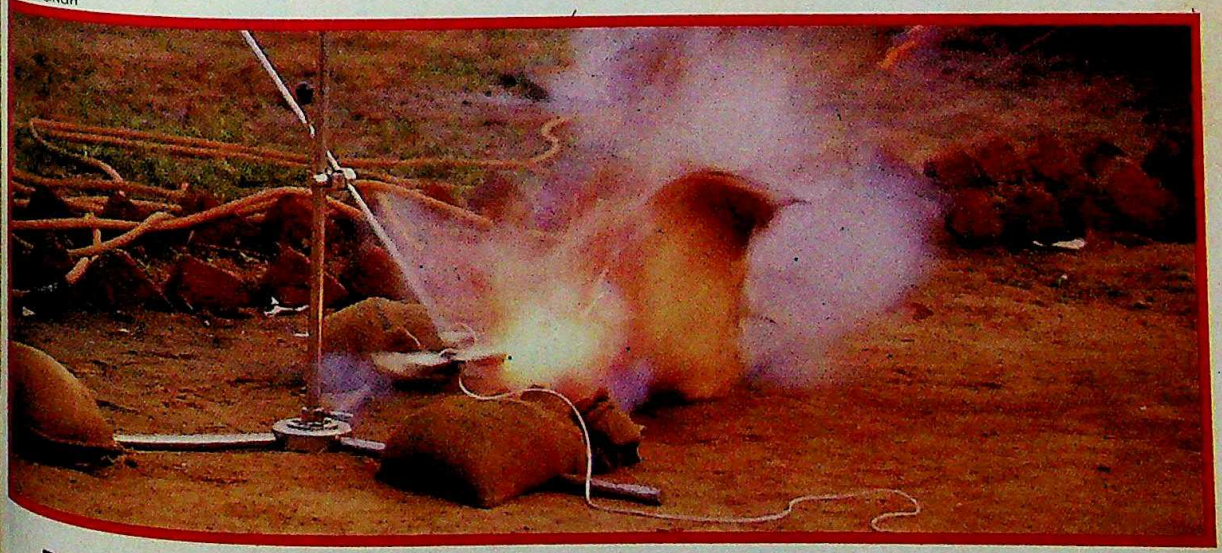


VACANCIES GALORE

IF there's one post that the local police dread taking up, it is a stint in the airport security division. Apart from the sheer monotony of the task—frisking passengers and scanning hand-baggage on X-ray machines—the job is considered far less "profitable" than a regular police beat. The result: vacancies are high and at most airports, the local police force are short of men. In Delhi, for instance, there are almost 100 posts lying vacant at all levels. In Bombay the number shoots to over 200.

Despite the lack of motivation, frisking tends to be quite thorough. But where the security system tends to slip is in baggage scrutiny. In Patna airport, for instance, the X-ray machine and metal detectors are frequently out of order. The workload is heavy, making one person scan X-rays for more than hour. The norm is usually 20 minutes to avoid eye-

BHAWAN SINGH



Bomb disposal squad's robot (top); and a parcel bomb being detonated: efficient

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in Calcutta, a few years ago, runway lights were stolen by suspected trespassers.

Most airports, in fact, have no patrolling of the perimeter and the police check points only look good on the map. Even when vehicles are allowed entry, all the police do is to check their cards.

Even during maximum alert situations, security is concentrated on the main complex leaving over 60 per cent of the perimeter exposed. Unlike in most western airports, no alarm system goes off in case the barb-wire fencing is cut. Most of the police are ill-equipped to combat terrorists with military training. A dangerous situation especially with the threat coming from Kashmir, Punjab, Assam and even Sri Lankan Tamils indulging in sabotage activity in the country.

PUBLIC MENACE

★ Plethora of hoax calls blunt security system.

★ VIPs don't like frisking and bring cars onto tarmac.

ID CARDS, VIPS & HOAXES

AT the airport, the colour of your ID card indicates your importance. Yellow: free access to any airport in the country. Red: access to all areas in a single airport. Blue: limited to maintenance and cargo zones. Green or white: access to a non-operational zone.

Every agency involved in dealing with the airports issues its own cards. The BCAS itself has issued 25,000 cards. And other agencies over 50,000. While in the case of yellow, red and blue cards, Home Ministry checks are mandatory, most of these are done cursorily. There are hardly any deep background checks being done and people who have access to critical areas are not constantly monitored by security agencies. With the threat coming from within, security officials agree the business of issuing cards has to be kept in strict check.

Other measures need to be stepped up. For instance, persons possessing ID cards are rarely stopped and checked to see if the cards are valid or genuine. And security personnel rarely frisk people with yellow cards. The assumption is that those having security cards are unlikely to smuggle dangerous weapons or devices into the airport—that could be a fatal flaw.

Another major problem is what officials call: VIPism. Most members of Parliament believe they should be given special treatment at the airport. Police are in fact chary of frisking people wearing khadi-suits. When a chief minister arrives, the crowds in many states become uncontrollable. Party workers stampede past security points and pandemonium prevails. Perfect for a bomb attack.

Worse, the new status symbol among government servants is whether their car can go right up to the tarmac so that they needn't walk to the arrival terminal. Initially only the cars of the prime minister and the President were allowed. Then that of the chief justice and governors were permitted. Now judges of the Supreme Court can have their cars drive right up to the aircraft. Even the wives and children of many of the VIPs insist on being picked up from the tarmac. This makes nonsense of the security system.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

VIPs milling around the apron, make nonsense of the security system

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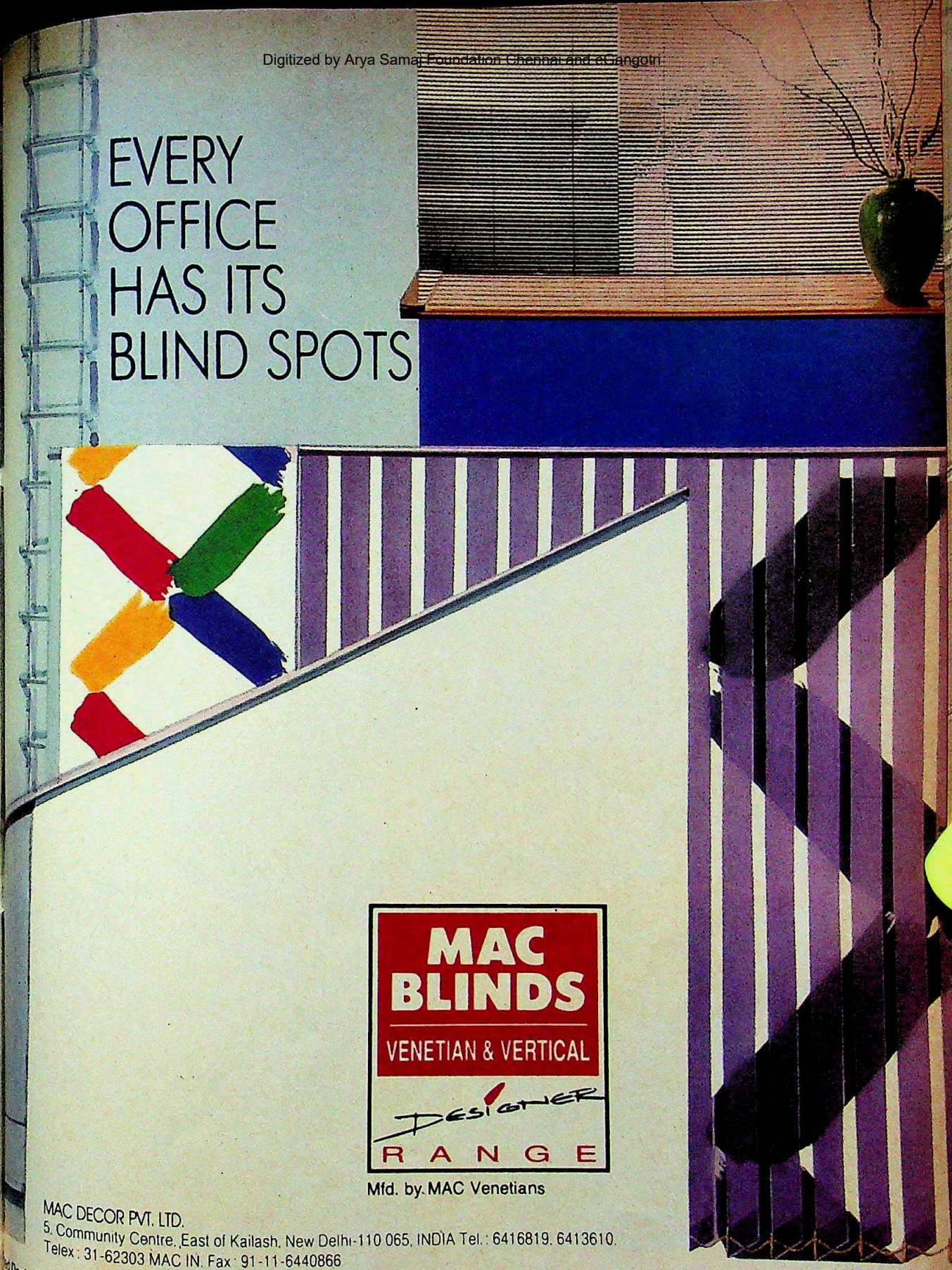
EVERY OFFICE HAS ITS BLIND SPOTS



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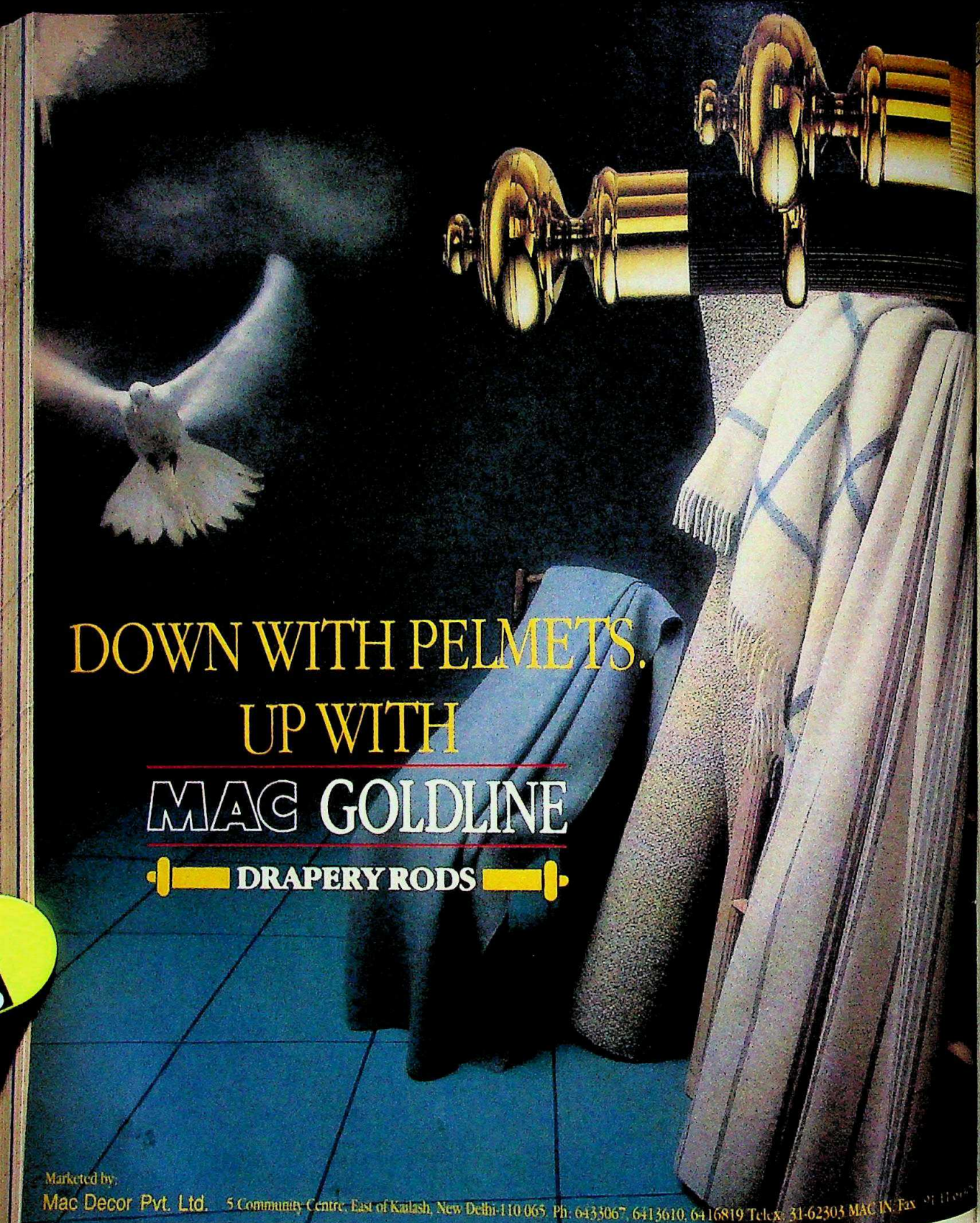

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To add to their woes is the spate of bomb hoaxes that airport officials receive. On an average in Delhi and Bombay airports, 25 calls are received every month. And apart from the Bomb Disposal Squad, security officials have to follow the strictly prescribed drill asking all passengers to disembark and thoroughly search the aircraft before clearing it. Complains V.K. Mathur, chairman, International Airports Authority of India (IAAI): "The system is overloaded with these hoax calls. And this has blunted our capacity to respond to genuine threats."

POROUS ZONE

★ **Indian Airlines X-rays luggage in only 7 of the 57 airports it flies out of.**

★ **Random checks done in the rest.**

CARGO: SHIP SLIP

TWO areas that security forces fear may be major sabotage zones are cargo and checked-in baggage. Both of these now have stringent verification checks. In the case of checked-in baggage, identification of articles is insisted upon before it is loaded. The psychology being that most terrorists would not like to blow themselves up. But Tamil militants have shown otherwise.

Also with the threat now coming from within, the entire passenger baggage checking system could easily turn porous. Currently, barely 20 out of 100 suitcases are X-rayed or searched for explosives. And only seven of the 57 airports that Indian Airlines operates out of have baggage X-ray facilities. In contrast, airports in the US are compulsorily fitted with electronic vapour detectors that virtually sniff out bombs.

Even the measure of identifying baggage can be subverted. The loaders can easily slip in a suitcase and mark it with white chalk to indicate that a passenger had identified it. To counter this the loaders are supposed to be frisked and their lockers checked. But as B.S. Rathore, director, security of Indian Airlines, admits: "We are not able to do the frisking regularly because we do not have enough staff."

A couple of years ago in Calcutta, a courier packet booked in exploded. Investigations revealed that the consignment contained rocket flares. Since then, courier parcels have either been checked or kept in the cooling pit for 24 hours.

For articles sent through cargo, the cooling-off period of 36 hours is pretty strict. But a single parcel in the cargo complex passes through seven different agencies. Soon after it is unloaded, the official loaders take the package to the customs area. After examination, the packet is given a 'location' by the IAAI and is shifted to the wire-meshed bonded area by the official handlers. At this point the airline puts the parcel on its manifest and notes its location. And although there is an X-ray machine, managed by the IAAI, airlines are reluctant to use it as the authority charges an additional levy. Most depend on the 36-hour 'cooling period'.

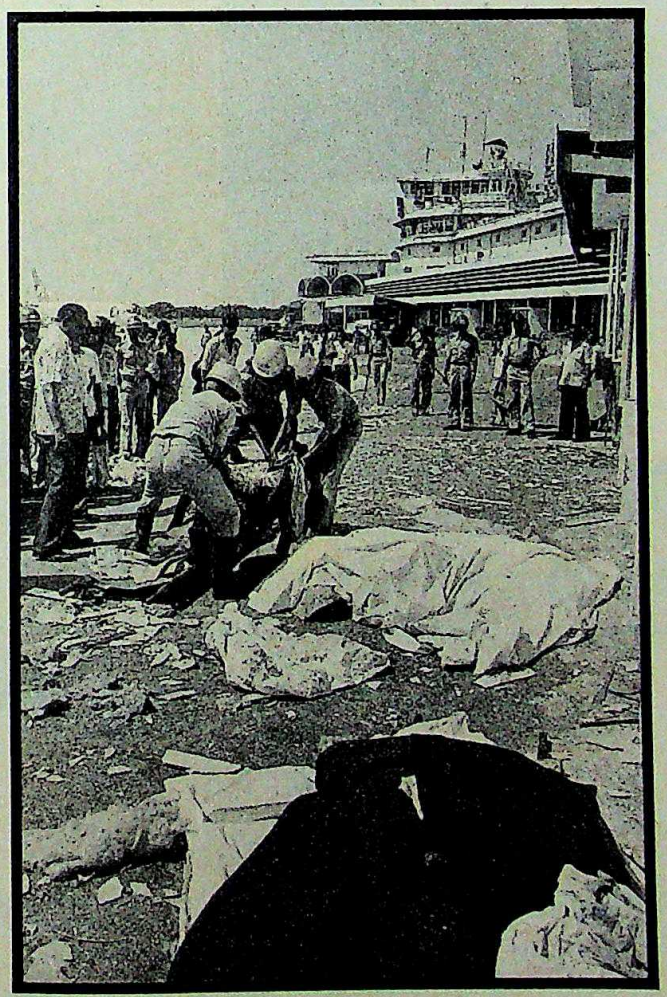
On the day of the flight the cargo is pushed onto the 'air side'—the apron beyond the bonded area—for loading. Normally, the cargo lies on the apron for about six hours before it is loaded by Air India's staff. It is thus open to everyone who has access to the apron. Many of the containers are unlocked and have only rexine covers which make them vulnerable to tampering.

Aviation experts say that there is a need for an independent security agency to scrutinise both passenger baggage and cargo. "The system has to protect the aircraft not only against the unknown intruder, but also against those who have access to aircraft," says Air India's vigilance chief D.C. Jugran.

The positive outcome of the Akbar bomb incident has been the thorough review of security procedures. Already in several key areas including catering, the Civil Aviation Ministry has ordered doubling of checks. Access to the airport is being regulated. ID cards are being screened thoroughly. And there is discussion on how to end the confusion on the agencies. These are very positive trends.

The main enemy of all these efforts: routine. The daily grind that can make anybody complacent and any system porous. That has to be guarded against. For, the next time round, Indian aviation may just run out of luck.

—With additional reports from PRAKASH M. SWAMY in Madras, M. RAHMAN in Bombay, FARZAND AHMED in Patna, and RUBEN BANERJEE in Calcutta



Victims of a suitcase bomb at Madras airport

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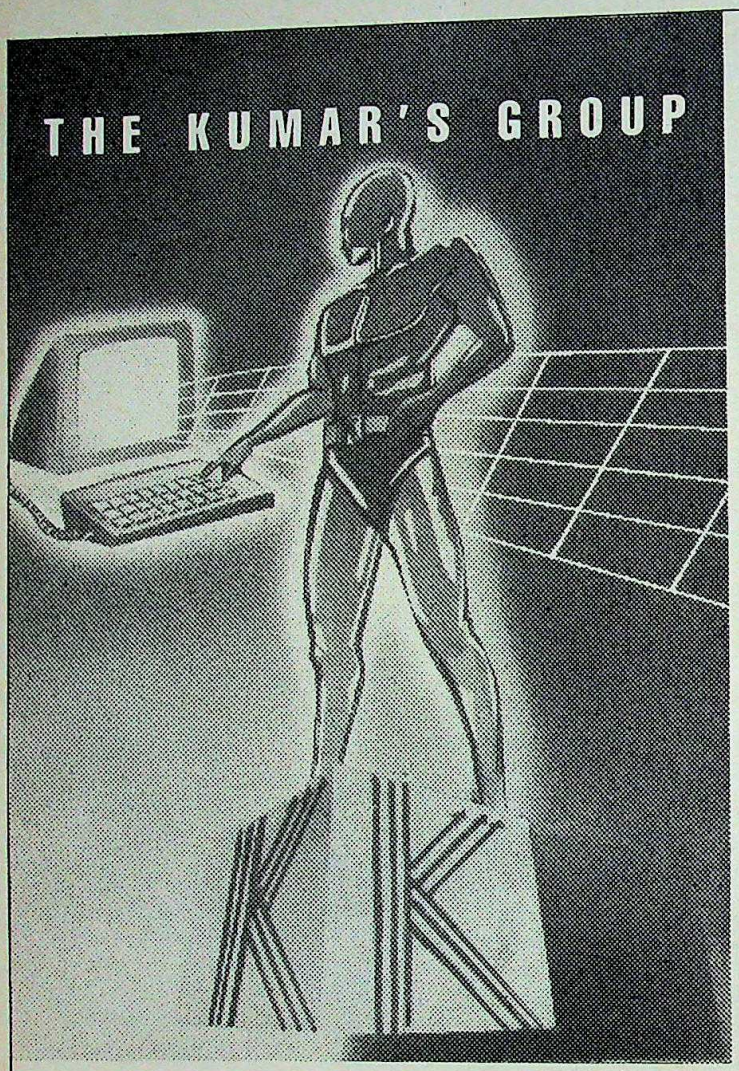

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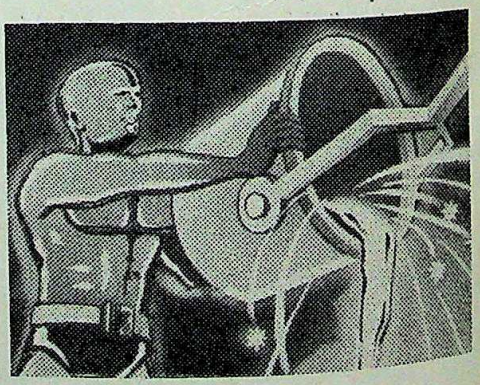

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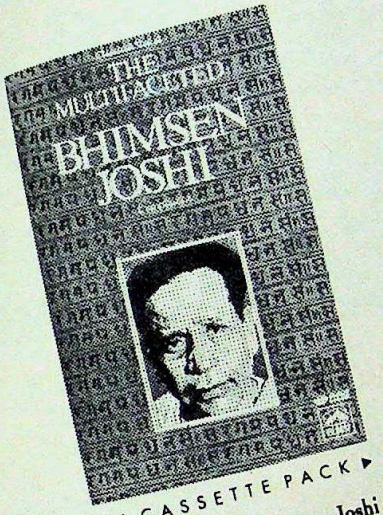

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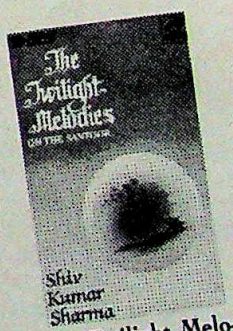

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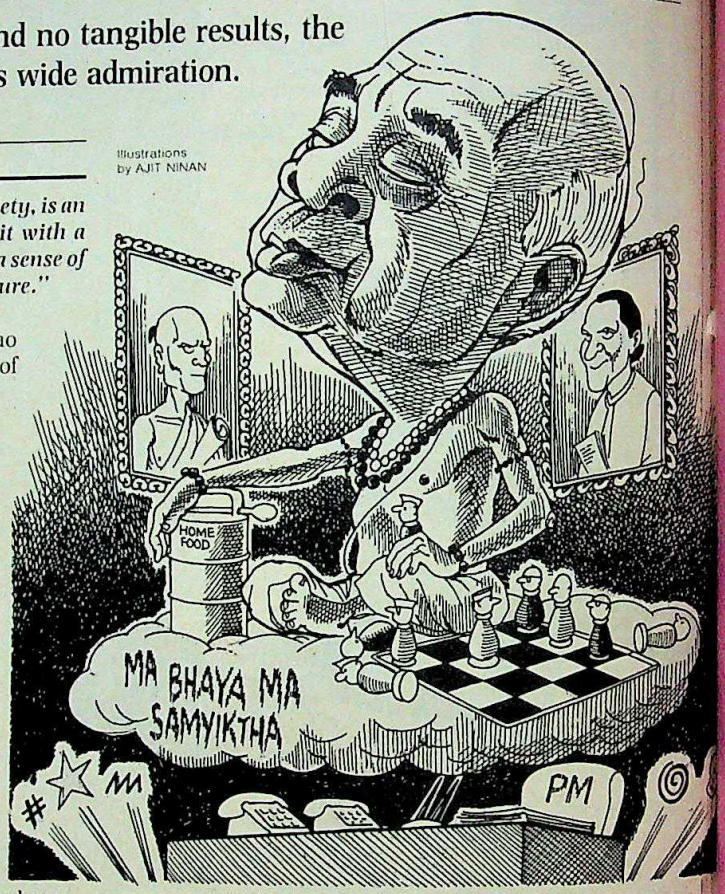
P.V. NARASIMHA RAO

Gaining in Stature

Despite insurmountable problems and no tangible results, the prime minister's low-key style draws wide admiration.

By ZAFAR AGHA



Illustrations by AJIT NINAN

"LIFE with all its vicissitudes, with all its variety, is an absorbing experience and one must try to take it with a certain amount of involvement and joy and with a sense of equanimity, which is the essence of Indian culture."

THIS was Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao enunciating the importance in his own life of the cardinal tenet of the Upanishads: *"ma bhaya ma samviktha"* (not daunted in defeat, not excited in victory). And as he acts out his fate, he actually begins to physically resemble the dictum. Drab, expressionless, unimpressive, inscrutable, yawn-inducing. Perhaps. But also meditative, cautious and low-key. Always, as the old hit goes, killing you softly with his song. And, as Krishna advised Arjun, "fighting without passion or ill-will, without anger or attachment".

If Sarvapelli Radhakrishnan was India's first philosopher-president, then Pamulaparti Venkata Narasimha Rao is its quintessential Brahminical *prajapati*. For, those who know him intimately insist that without understanding the Brahminical attributes that permeate his personality, it is impossible to understand how he functions or why he functions at all. Or why after a shaky start, the man who didn't even have a constituency not only came to Parliament on the wings of a famous victory, but is also in command of a country seemingly at odds with itself. It is his uncanny ability to distance himself from these problems before attending to them that imbues him with a distinct identity and, yes, even style. How else does one explain the man's capability, as an aide put it, to "float over his surroundings"? And emerge as the man in control, admired, and above all, respected.

It is this unlikely hero who not only never showed any panic over the minority status of his government but also seemed mock his doomsayers by introducing the most far-reaching economic reforms ever witnessed in the country. It was with "detachment and dedication" that he used BJP support to elect a Speaker of his choice. He was not, as the Gita preaches, "defiled by disgust" in using the Mandal card against the Janata Dal or watching the BJP stew in its own juice over the latest Ayodhya stir. Nor was he inflated "by the sense of a separate ego" when L.K. Advani described him as the best prime minister since Lal Bahadur Shastri.

He may bore you to death, but a country fed on an overdose of drama is not keen on returning to the politics of confrontation, conflict and Camelot. He has, as Biju Patnaik says, "banished high-handedness". And there seems to be an acceptance of the subtle statecraft and the tepid temperature that he has infused into the overheated politics of India as he goes about his quotidian karma replete with cosmic contradictions. He is settling down. And is being taken seriously in the brave new world of post-dynastic politics.

The quintessential Brahmin's simplicity hides a shrewd skill at outwitting opponents and sailing through crises.

REAPING THE FRUITS OF INVISIBILITY

The transcendental joys of being and non-being

SHUNNING glamour and controversy is second nature to Narasimha Rao. So protective is he of his privacy and such a stickler for simplicity that even his closest political associates do not know that he hates eating out. Says K.R. Pandey, who has been his additional private secretary for over a decade: "He likes very simple food and even if he goes out for an offical lunch or dinner, he eats little and has his meal after getting back home." And even when he travels abroad, his Malayalee cook Kannan accompanies him to rustle up his fanatically vegetarian fare. The ingredients—rice, wheat flour, vegetables—travel too, as do the utensils

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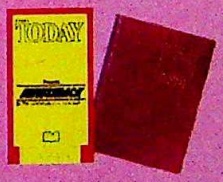

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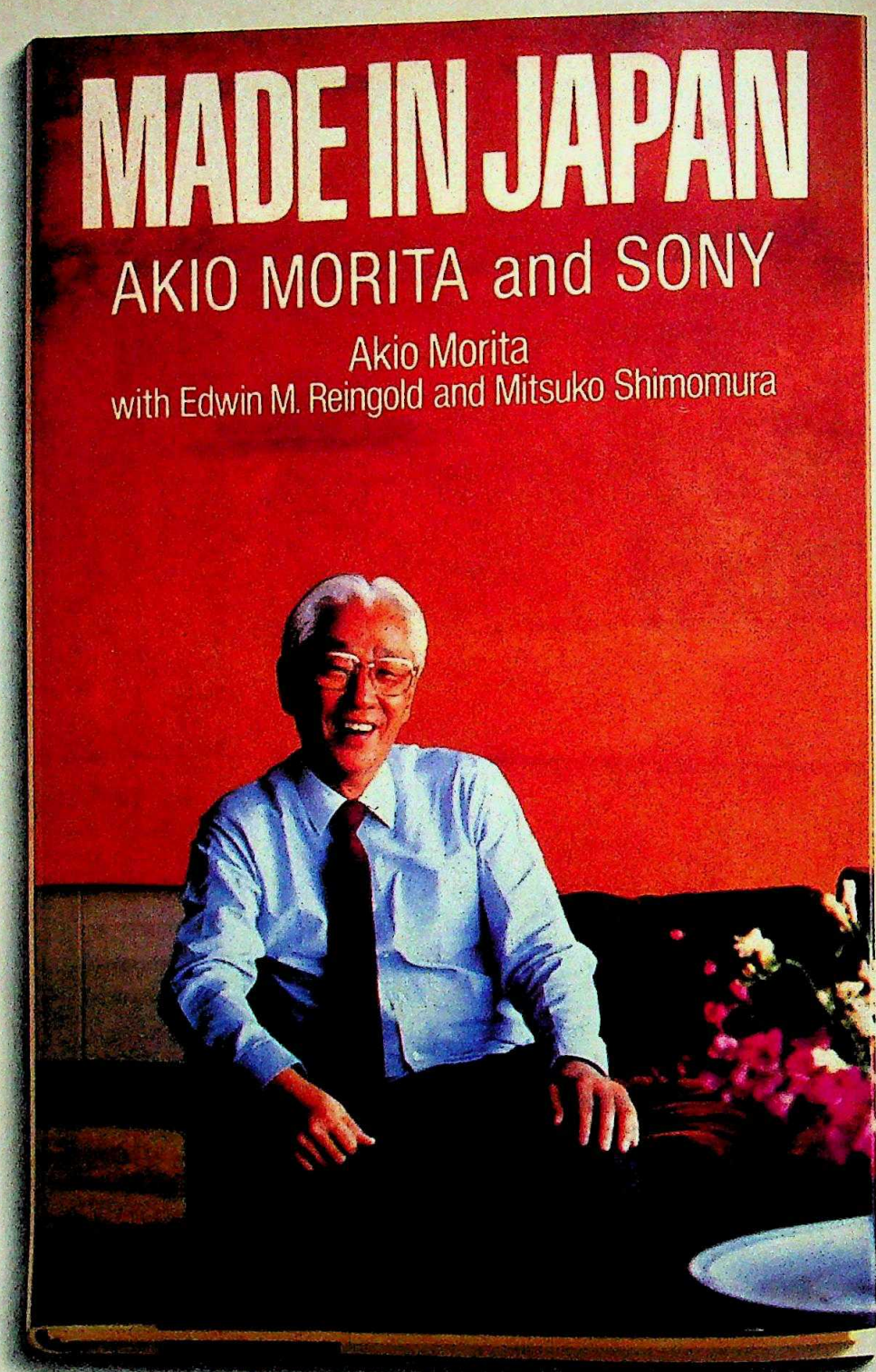

Made in Japan: The saga of how a group of young men met in a burnt down departmental store in war devastated Tokyo, and went on to build one of the most powerful and respected multinationals in the world-Sony.

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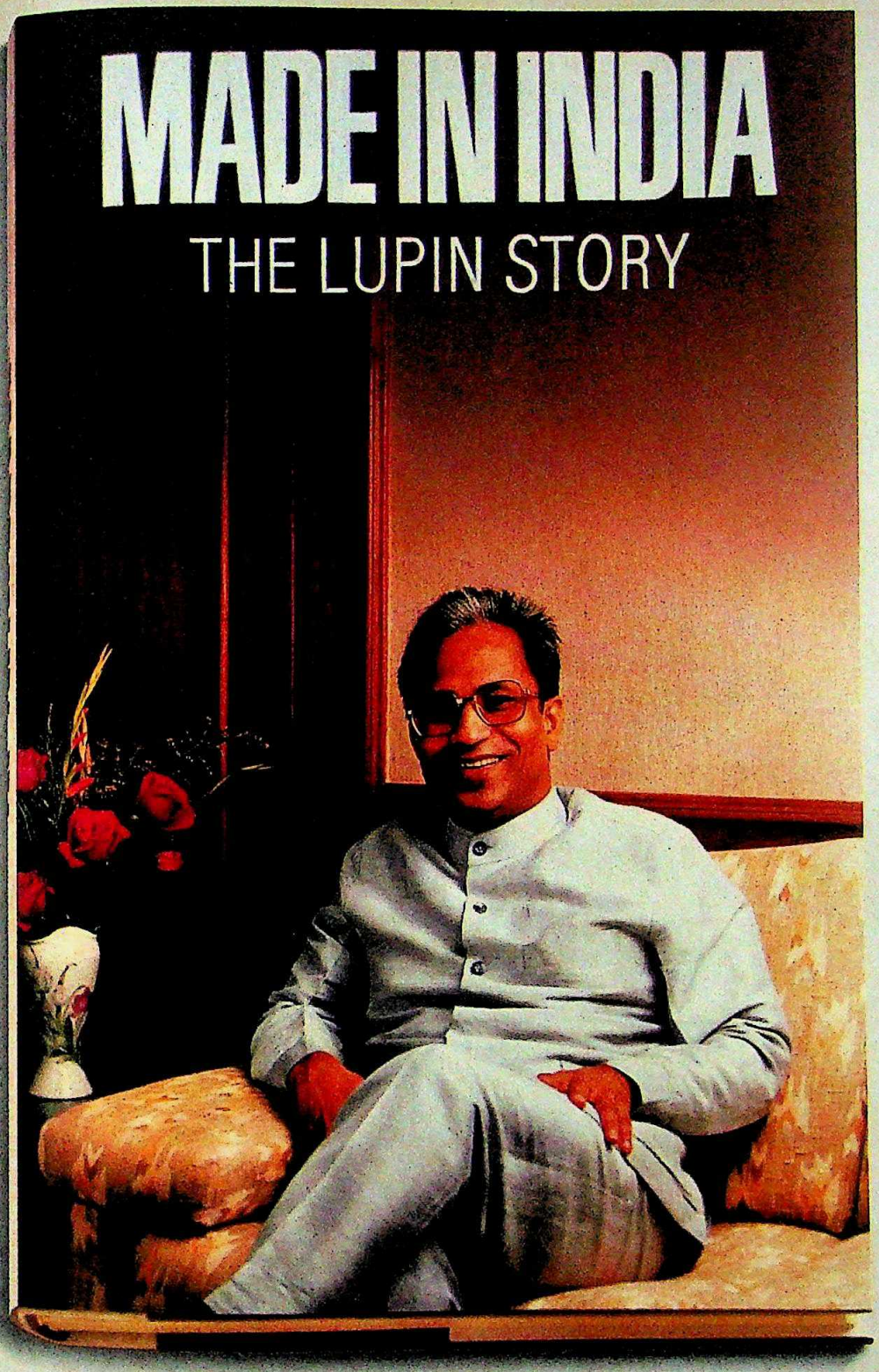
MADE IN INDIA

THE LUPIN STORY



The saga of a professor who came from Rajasthan to Bombay, with little but a dream. For Rs. 5000, he bought a ramshackle laboratory. Today, in its place stands Lupin: a Rs. 300 crore company with a growth rate of 40%. (The industry average is 15%.) It commands over 60% of the world market for Ethambutol : the anti-tuberculosis wonder drug. And is, now, a global name in pharmaceuticals. Of course, there are still some people who maintain that you have to be a multinational to achieve international fame. That being a mere Indian company isn't enough. Somewhere in this there's a lesson for them all. ***LUPIN LABORATORIES.***

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in which they are to be cooked. And if the *tawa* (hot plate) and *belan* (rolling pin) are dropped, as they were from the suitcases that flew with the prime minister to Harare, then 'saheb' might well have to forego chapattis.

It is this trait—this passion for keeping it simple, keeping it private—that has reaped an unexpected bonanza for Narasimha Rao's public image. Previous prime ministers—Mrs Gandhi, Morarji Desai, even V.P. Singh—earned political opprobrium because of their kith and kin being involved in controversies. So far, notwithstanding his association with high society godman, Chandra Swami, even Narasimha Rao's opponents have been unable to tarnish his family, which he keeps well out of sight, with even the breath of a scandal. Apart from P.V. Ranga Rao, who is minister for primary and secondary education in Andhra Pradesh, neither of his two other sons and none of his five daughters have been allowed a shot at the spotlight. And when his Hyderabad-based son, P.V. Rajeshwara Rao, tried to bask in his newly-won glory and was being wooed by industrialists in New Delhi, the prime minister sent him packing back to Andhra Pradesh. Recalls a senior bureaucrat who worked with him in the Human Resource Development Ministry: "I worked with him for over two years and I do not recall ever meeting any one from his family."

MEDITATING THROUGH A CRISIS

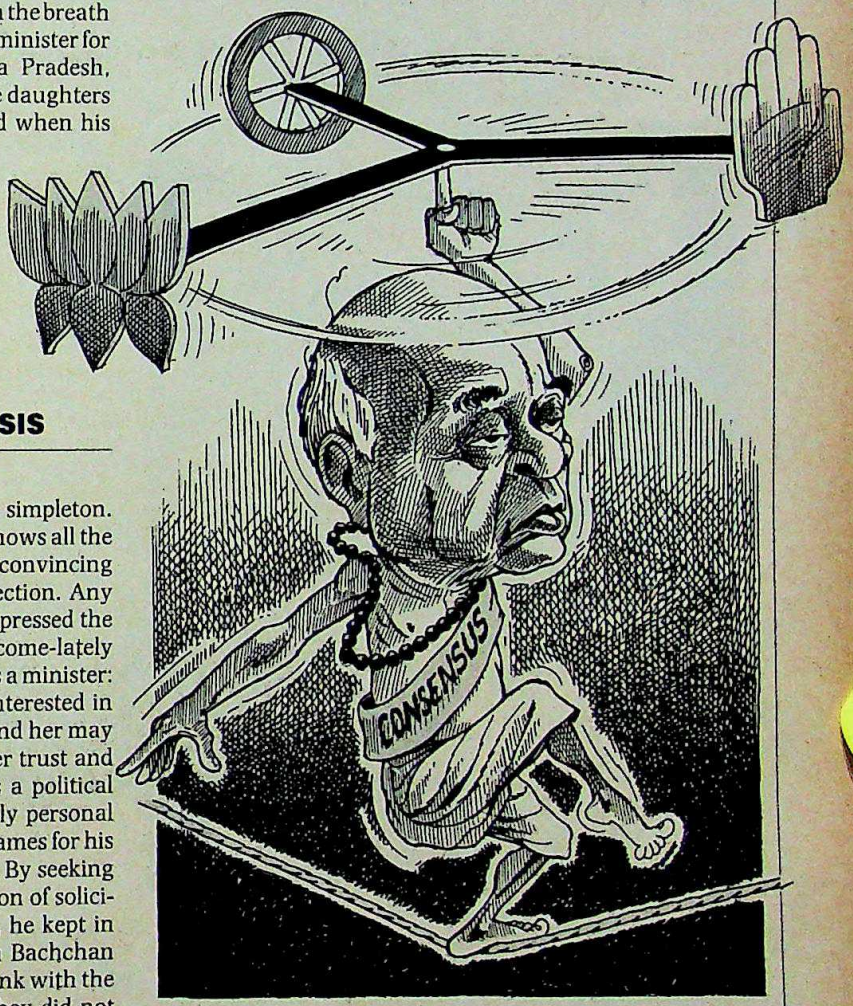
The tables turn, by magic

BUT his simplicity does not make him a simpleton. Shrewd and experienced, Narasimha Rao knows all the right moves. By far his most crucial test was convincing Sonia Gandhi not to contest the Amethi by-election. Any one else in Narasimha Rao's place would have pressed the panic button. Instead, the prime minister-come-lately adopted a cool, *om shanti, shanti,* approach. Says a minister: "Narasimha Rao sensed that Sonia was not interested in politics but he was also aware that people around her may push her into politics." The key was to gain her trust and finesse the cabal which wanted to use her as a political pawn. He did so, by not only maintaining daily personal contact with her, but also sending her a list of names for his council of ministers soon after his swearing-in. By seeking her approval, he made a powerful demonstration of solicitude for the Gandhi family. At the same time, he kept in constant contact with Rajiv loyalists Amitabh Bachchan and Satish Sharma—Chandra Swami was his link with the aviator-turned-politician—and ensured that they did not have any cause to turn against him. The strategy paid high dividends. For it was to Narasimha Rao that Sonia personally made known her decision not to contest. And it was he, rather than any other cabal member or the Gandhi household, who made the first authoritative announcement to partymen about Sonia's final decision. Subsequently, Rajiv Gandhi's aide Vincent George—who had quietly orchestrated the anti-Narasimha Rao palace intrigues—came in for a rude awakening to the altered power equations. George, as was his wont, phoned the prime minister regarding appointments in certain ministries. In the past, a call from him—even though Sonia's name was never directly mentioned—was supposed to be an indication of her interests, and an adequate hint for instant action. But in the changed circumstances, Narasimha Rao responded curtly: "Well, the job will be done. Now put me through to Soniaji." The shoe was on the other foot.

MAINTAINING A METAPHYSICAL DUALISM

You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours

HE is sure of himself but also of his limitations. With no following, no charisma, and the albatross-like minority Government, Narasimha Rao knows he can survive only with the backing of the opposition parties in the Lok Sabha. In this mission, it is consensus that is his mantra. And he uses his long familiarity with senior opposition politicians to silence them into submission. The most vulnerable moment in his tenuous ties with the BJP came when Bajrang Dal volunteers stormed the Ayodhya shrine. Instead of reaching for the nearest paramilitary unit and biting the militant Hindu bait, Narasimha Rao turned the fracas into a local law and order problem. He did so without giving Advani the impression that the party was a political pariah and convinced him that he would not go for the BJP's jugular as did V.P. Singh. Having secured a commitment from the party that it would abide by the High Court judgements, Narasimha Rao sat back to enjoy the internecine squabbling in the sangh *parivar*. In fact, he has always taken care not to



Aware of his own limitations, he has taken care not to treat the BJP as a political pariah, resisting every attempt at provocation.

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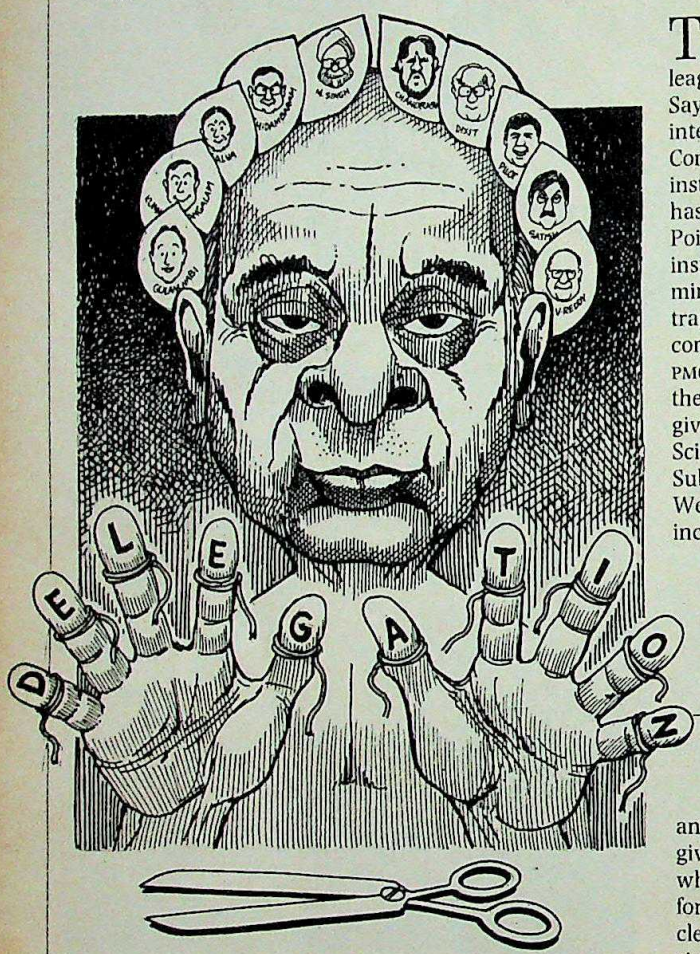
tread on the BJP's toes. When riots broke out in Varanasi, he persuaded Union Civil Aviation Minister Madhavrao Scindia not to visit the town as it would embarrass the BJP.

DANCING LIKE A SHIVA

I can steal your thunder

BUT all his rivals are not equal. Often Narasimha Rao does not mean to do what he says. As Janata Dal leader V.P. Singh and Left leaders realised in the controversy over Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan during the Budget session of Parliament. Angry with Seshan's "hostile attitude towards the Janata Dal in Bihar" in the last general elections, the National Front-Left Front parties had planned an impeachment motion against Seshan. Assuring them that he would shift Seshan, the prime minister asked them to drop the idea. "We did not suspect his intentions then," says Ram Vilas Paswan. But even when the session was long over, Seshan remained in office.



While according respect to senior leaders, Narasimha Rao has used junior ministers to get his work done.

He can be equally ruthless with intra-party challengers. Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh should have sent in his resignation as leader of the party in the Lok Sabha once Narasimha Rao was elected from Nandyal. But even after the prime minister returned from the G-15 summit in Caracas, he did not. Arjun Singh had perhaps wanted to precipitate a showdown. But it was no go. Summoning Ghulam Nabi Azad, the prime minister told him to send an official letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker, telling him that Narasimha Rao was now the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha. The Speaker made the announcement on December 6. Arjun Singh had to step aside.

DELEGATING TO RULE

There's a method in magnanimity

THOSE who do not question his authority merit largely magnanimous treatment. Most Cabinet colleagues are enjoying this unaccustomed burst of spring. Says Azad: "Except for policy matters, Rao Saheb never interferes in our ministries." Union Minister of State for Communications Rajesh Pilot echoes him: "We do not get instructions from the PMO." In fact, Narasimha Rao's PMO has, so far, been the least obtrusive in the past two decades. Points out a senior bureaucrat: "It is a PMO of professionals instead of power brokers and fixers." It shows. Of the prime ministerial appendages in the recent past, it has the fewest trappings of power. For instance, when IBM recently contacted the PMO to check on its project with the Tatas, the PMO politely directed them to the Foreign Investment Board, the "competent authority". Even his adversaries are not given a raw deal as long as they do not rock the boat. When Scindia wanted to replace acting Air India chairman Subhash Gupte with his nominee, Yogi Deveshwar, former Welcomgroup chairman, it was done. But if they show any inclination to wander, then like Arjun Singh and Union Defence Minister Sharad Pawar, they are given virtually little of substance to do. And when he wants to get things done, Narasimha Rao prefers to delegate authority to the younger lot of ministers.

CONFORMING TO NORMS

The wise can inherit the earth

OTHERWISE, Narasimha Rao is a great believer in form, the system, and the order of things. To avoid any complaints from senior leaders, Narasimha Rao always gives them the letter, if not the spirit, of respect. For instance, when he goes abroad, he authorises the Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs (CCPA) to take decisions. "It is a very clever move—leaving six CCPA members in charge so that no single politician may get an advantage," says a minister. Then, soon after he took over as prime minister, there was pressure on him to replace governors. But he stood firm.

When a real crisis erupts, it is this curious mix of velvet glove and iron fist that will be tested. Should a rival lose patience, the economy fall apart or a support base fail to materialise, which Narasimha Rao will come to the fore? The crafty Machiavelli who subverts the system or the benign elder statesman who uses it to his own advantage? It took only a couple of years for Rajiv Gandhi's magnificent lustre to rust and less than that for V.P. Singh's apolitical aura to dissipate. When the Opposition regroups its forces and the unruly Congress(I) reasserts its root—and rude—character, will Narasimha Rao be able to cut through the undergrowth or will the vastness of the country's premier party swallow another pretender? The answer may well be blowing in the wind. But for now, it is his "healing touch" as Biju Patnaik calls it, that the country needs. ■

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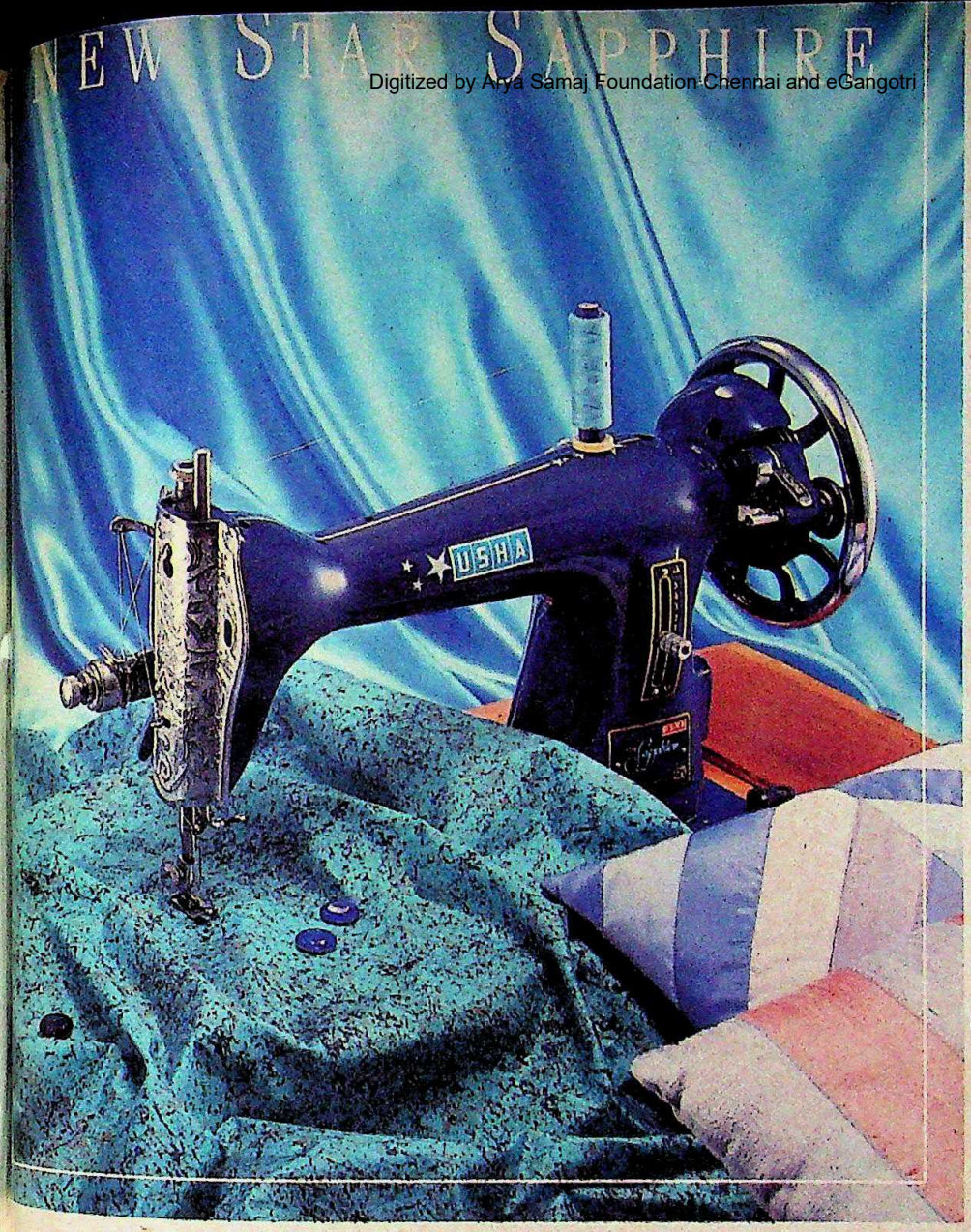

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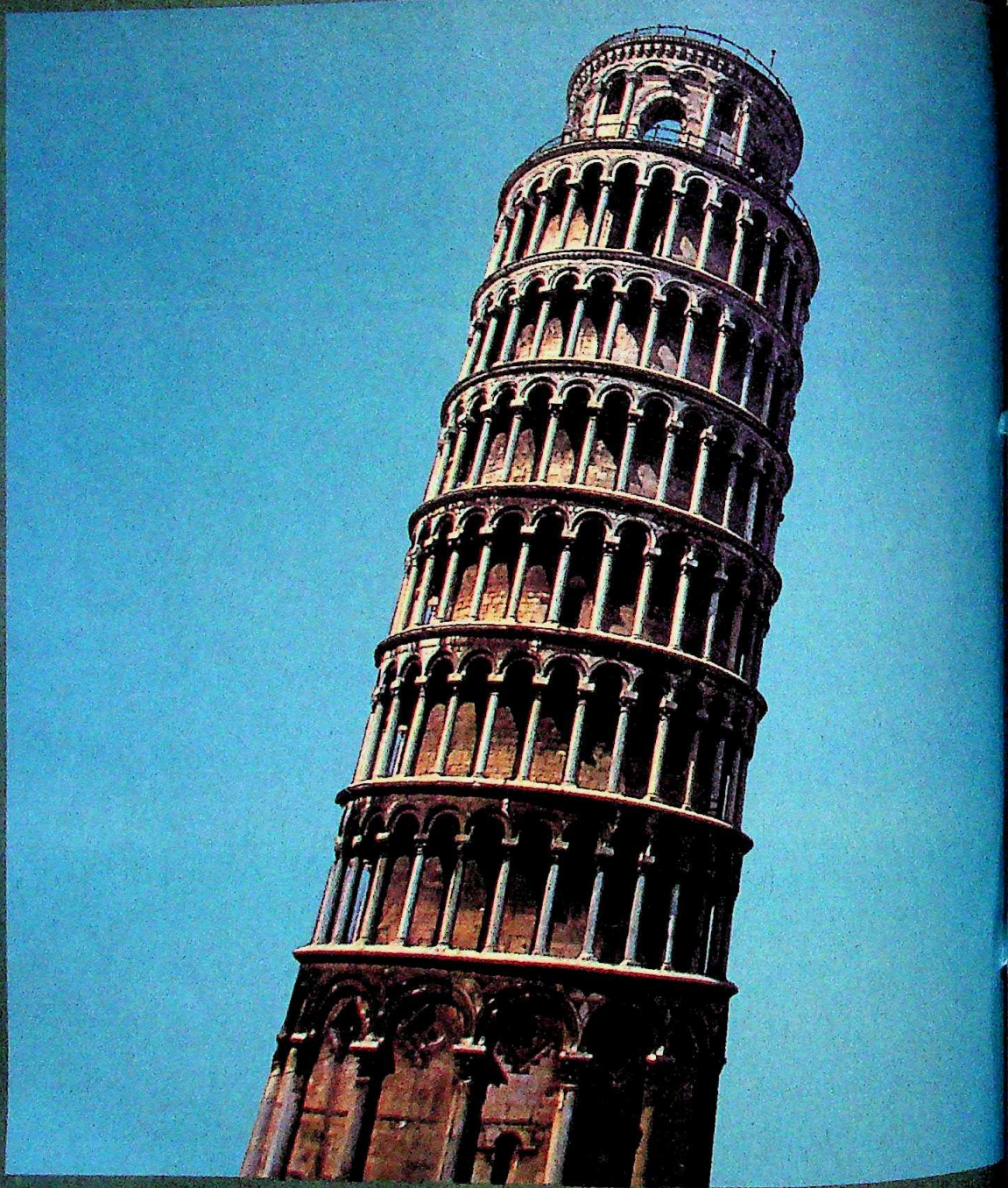

EXACTLY WHY DID WE TIE UP
WITH THE WORLD LEADER
IN EYECARE? LEAN A LITTLE CLOSER.

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BHUTAN BOARD

A JOINT VENTURE OF THE ROYAL GOVT. OF BHUTAN

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DATTA SAMANT

Labouring for Control

Coming in the wake of a humiliating electoral defeat and the failure of a textile strike, the desertion of his trusted aide signals the decline of the trade union leader.

By M. RAHMAN

WITH his well-trimmed goatee and Shakespearian nose, Tukaram S. Borade could be mistaken for a character actor from the Hindi film industry. But for legendary labour leader Datta Samant, engaged in a critical battle to retain control of a vast trade union empire, he is the villain at the factory gate. As Samant struggles to arrest the increasing decline in his fire-breathing career as a trade union leader, his long-time lieutenant and hatchet man, Borade is busy mobilising workers against his former boss. Borade is exhorting them not to tolerate the "arrogance and high-handedness" of a man who, until recently, was hailed as the messiah of the working class.

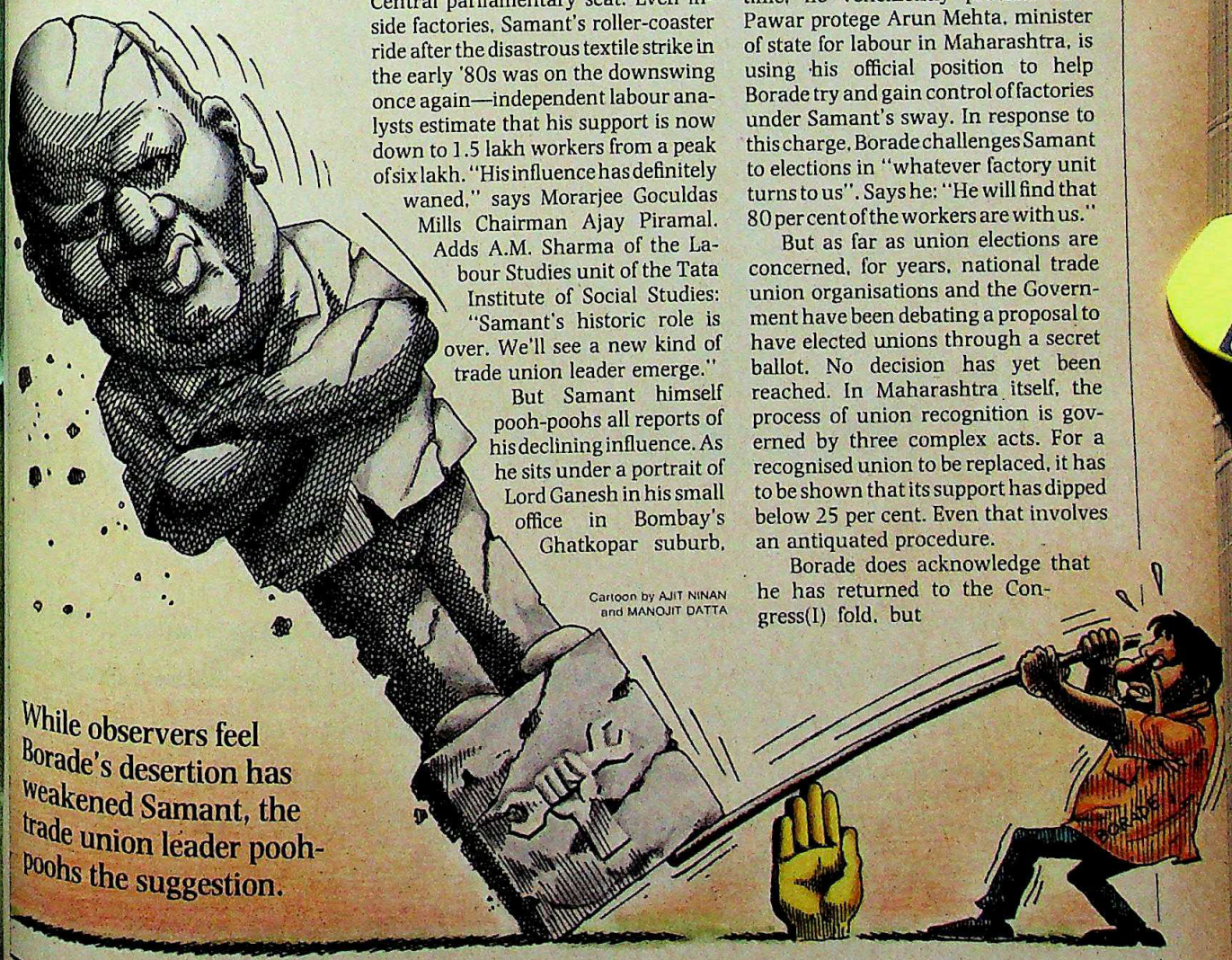
For Samant, Borade's desertion in October, after an association lasting more than two decades, came as an untimely blow just when his fortunes had hit rock-bottom. Already in June, Samant had suffered another humiliating defeat in the contest for the labour-dominated Bombay South-Central parliamentary seat. Even inside factories, Samant's roller-coaster ride after the disastrous textile strike in the early '80s was on the downswing once again—independent labour analysts estimate that his support is now down to 1.5 lakh workers from a peak of six lakh. "His influence has definitely waned," says Morarjee Goculdas Mills Chairman Ajay Piramal. Adds A.M. Sharma of the Labour Studies unit of the Tata Institute of Social Studies: "Samant's historic role is over. We'll see a new kind of trade union leader emerge."

But Samant himself pooh-poohs all reports of his declining influence. As he sits under a portrait of Lord Ganesh in his small office in Bombay's Ghatkopar suburb, he says that nothing has changed. "All my unions are fully with me. In fact, in some parts of Maharashtra, my following is going up. I still have 15 lakh workers with me," he says.

For Samant, the departure of Borade is yet another "inconsequential" instance of associates being enticed away by his political rivals, in this case by the Congress(I) and Union Defence Minister Sharad Pawar. "Hardly 300 workers have gone with Borade. In the last 10 years, many like him have left because I want to change the system," he maintains. At the same time, he vehemently protests that Pawar protege Arun Mehta, minister of state for labour in Maharashtra, is using his official position to help Borade try and gain control of factories under Samant's sway. In response to this charge, Borade challenges Samant to elections in "whatever factory unit turns to us". Says he: "He will find that 80 per cent of the workers are with us."

But as far as union elections are concerned, for years, national trade union organisations and the Government have been debating a proposal to have elected unions through a secret ballot. No decision has yet been reached. In Maharashtra itself, the process of union recognition is governed by three complex acts. For a recognised union to be replaced, it has to be shown that its support has dipped below 25 per cent. Even that involves an antiquated procedure.

Borade does acknowledge that he has returned to the Congress(I) fold, but



Cartoon by AJIT NINAN and MANOJIT DATTA

While observers feel Borade's desertion has weakened Samant, the trade union leader pooh-poohs the suggestion.

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declares: "My mission now is to re-open all the factories closed by Dr Samant." One of these is the Nasik unit of the Rs 150-crore VIP Industries, whose 2,000 workers have been locked out since August. Samant's demand for a massive wage hike was rejected by the management, which insists that in spite of the closure, the company has maintained its daily production level of moulded luggage through its other units in the state. "Samant's stand is hurting the workers more than us. He's got to realise that unionised workers are already getting very high wages," maintains VIP Chairman Dilip Piramal.

SUCH a realisation is aeons away from 58-year-old Samant's origins as a labour leader. A doctor who was moved by the exploitation of quarry workers to turn into a trade unionist in the '60s, Samant struck terror among factory-owners by demanding massive wage hikes. In the early years, he functioned as a Congress(I) trade unionist under the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). But he broke away from INTUC, along with aides like Borade, in 1972, after violence involving the Godrej group. His popularity grew and by the time he called the historic Bombay textile strike in January 1982, he controlled the largest number of workers through unions like the Association of Engineering Workers and the Maharashtra Girni Kamgar Union (MGKU). His unions came under the organisation, Kamgar Aghadi, which he converted into a political party.

However, the textile strike exposed Samant's weaknesses as a labour leader. Poor strategy and a lack of understanding of the backward textile industry resulted in a futile and prolonged strike which Samant's MGKU has still not officially called off. But as desperate workers began trickling back to the factories, triumphant mill-owners either closed down unproductive units or sacked more than one lakh workers. Thousands have still to receive their legal dues. "A predominantly militant style works so far and no further," observes Cadbury's Personnel Director, Arun Joshi.

But Samant continued to hold workers in thrall. In 1985 he won the Bombay South-Central Lok Sabha seat convincingly, and three other Kamgar Aghadi leaders, including wife Vineeta Samant, won in the Assembly polls. "Samant's great achievement was to gain respect for workers, to teach managements to stop hoodwinking them. That's why he headed a movement, and not so much a traditional trade union," explains labour lawyer Colin Gonsalves.

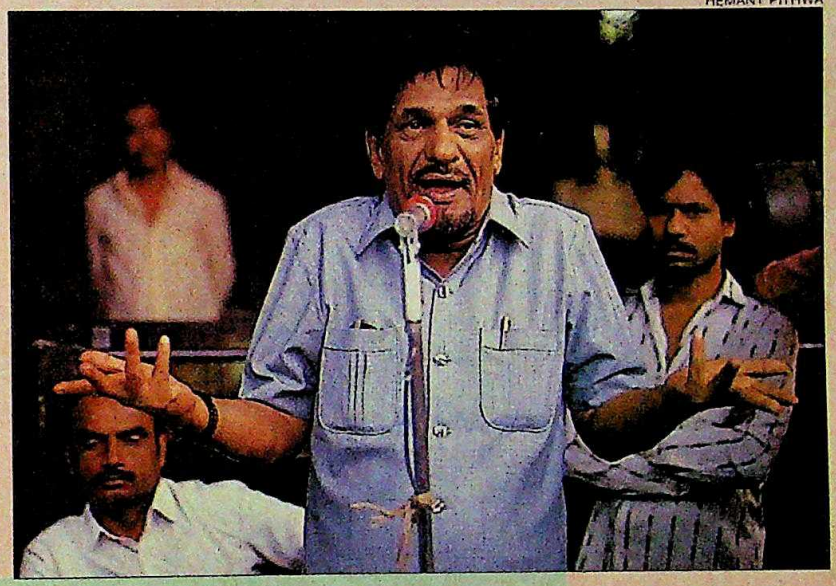
But Samant's success also sowed the seeds of his decline. The wage hikes he won raised workers' standard of living substantially, so they stand to lose much more by strikes and lockouts. Better educated, better paid workers also became self-reliant, so internal workers' unions, with little or no connection with major outside trade unions, became successful. And as Samant's influence grew, his failure to develop an organisational structure created frustration and disillusionment among his followers.

Indeed, Samant trusts no one, and runs his trade union empire from his small office like a private fiefdom. His elder brother, P.B. Samant, functions in his shadow, while he has discouraged his three sons from entering the field. Samant's reluctance to use courts in the workers' struggle and his inability to understand balance sheets rebounded on him as militancy waned. Along with this came charges of corruption and dissension among his close associates. Philosophises rival and independent trade union leader R.J. Mehta: "If you don't keep pace with the changing world, you're bound to be washed out."

Yet, even as the firebrand doctor's influence declines, there are not many who are willing to write him off completely. "Samant's failure to build an organisation has cost him dear, but he is far from finished," asserts Ceat Tyres Personnel Manager, B.K.Singh.

No doubt in the coming years, as labour-management relations turn more complex with modernisation and liberalisation, many analysts envisage that trade union leaders will be required to find solutions for complex problems hand-in-hand with the management. But there is growing anxiety that the deepening economic malaise will rob thousands of workers of their jobs or hard-won prosperity. This could result in a militant resurgence, and the return of Samant to centre-stage. But till the tide turns, Samant must ensure that the once-throbbing engine of his craft does not stall and leave him stranded on the shores of trade union history. ■

HEMANT PITHWA



Breakaway leader T.S. Borade addressing workers

Borade is busy mobilising workers against Samant, exhorting them not to tolerate his 'arrogance' any more.

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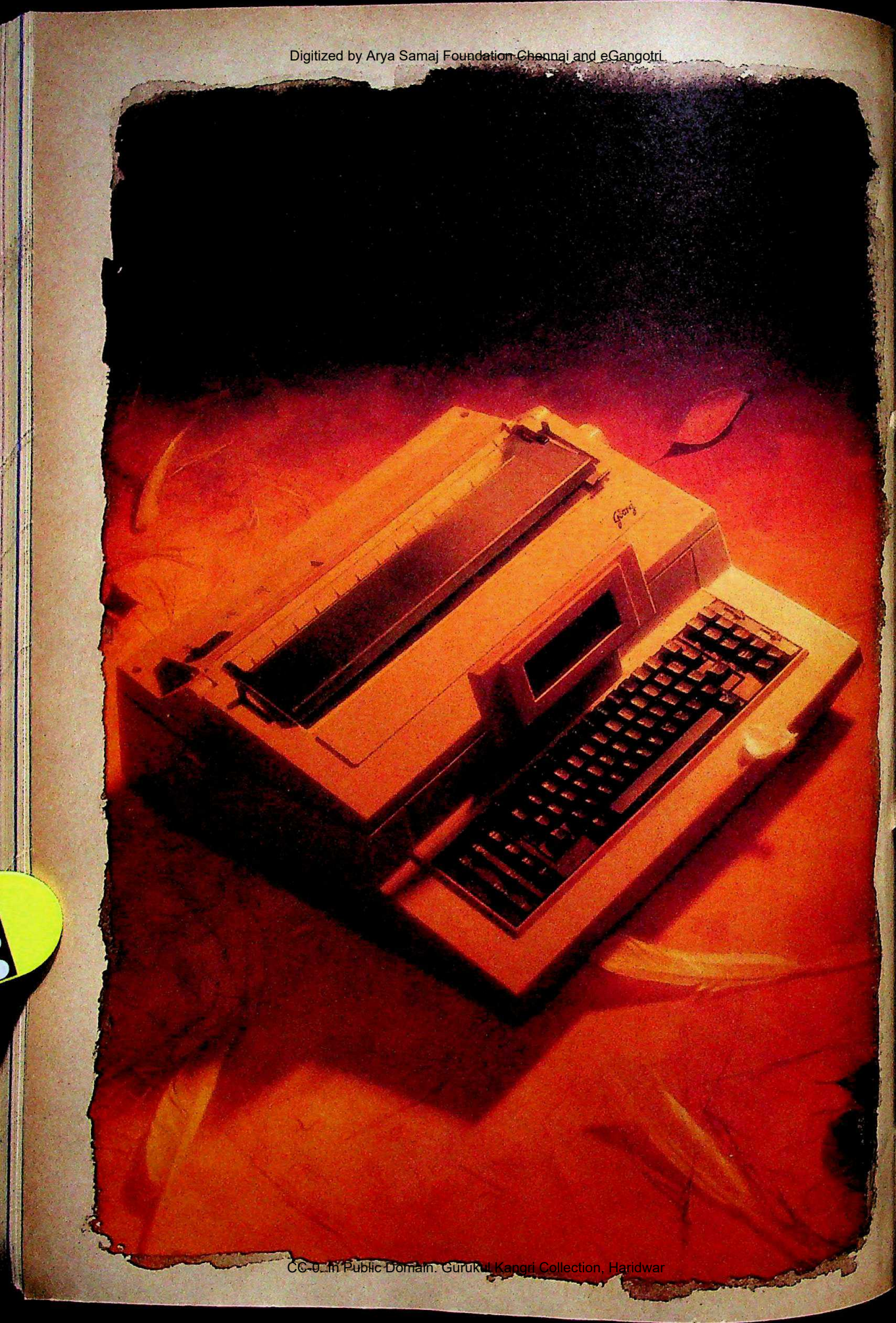

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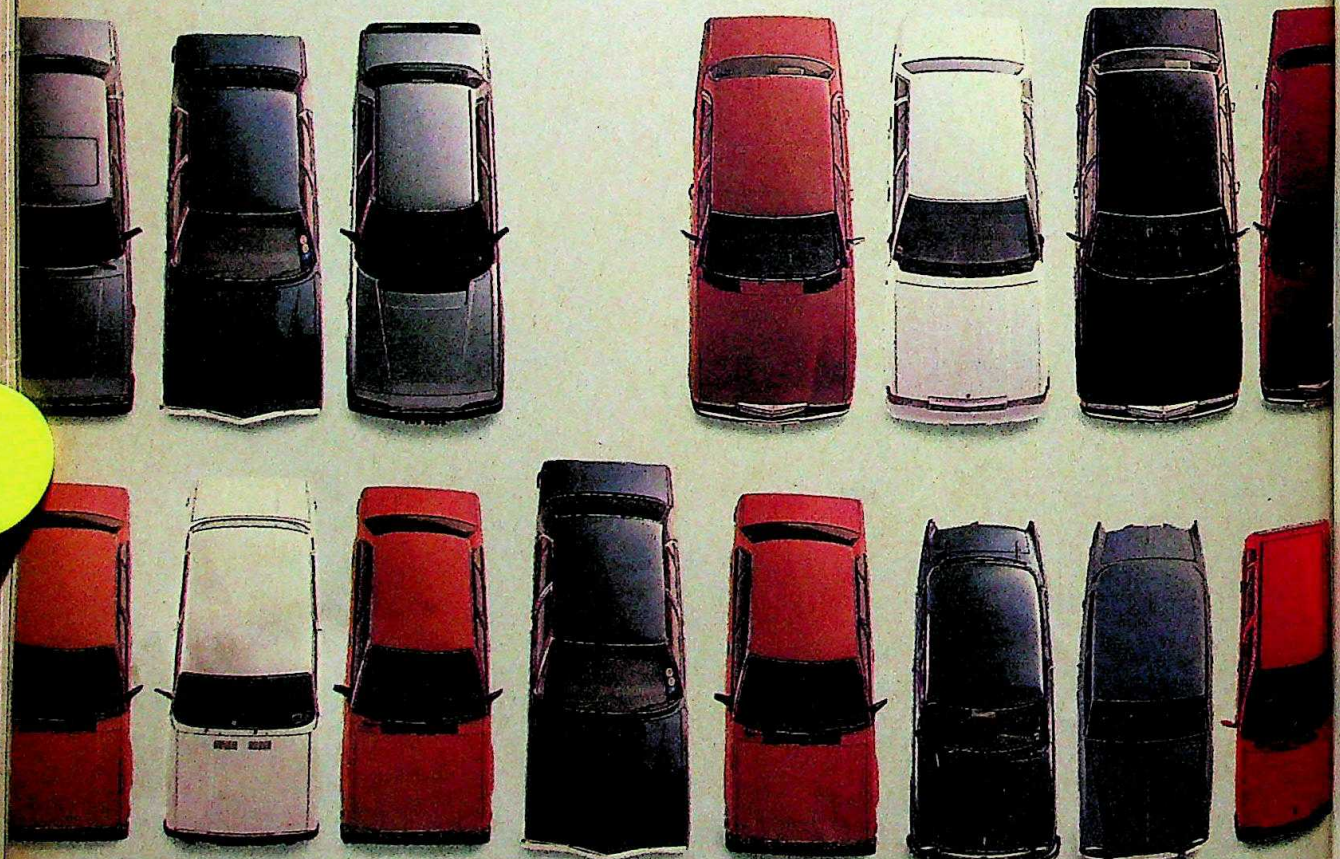

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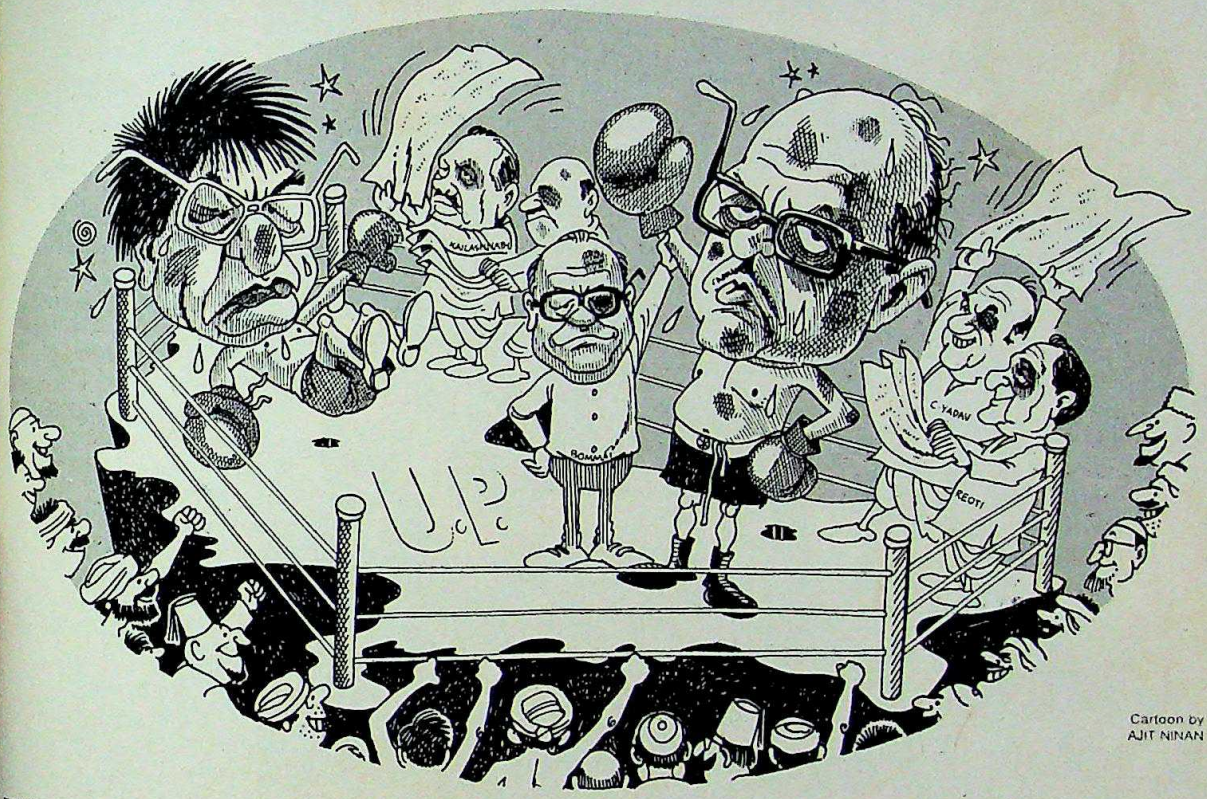
JANATA DAL

Suicidal Shenanigans

Although V.P. Singh has emerged victorious from the latest round of internal strife, the row has weakened the party's base and could also spell a serious downturn in Ajit Singh's political career.



Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

By JAVED M. ANSARI and DILIP AWASTHI

NEVER hit a man when he's down, they say. Former prime minister V.P. Singh obviously doesn't abide by the axiom. He hit back at Ajit Singh when his troublesome rival's fortunes had been knocked for a six. Worse, it was in Ajit Singh's very own backyard. But as the dust settled on the party's split in Uttar Pradesh, it seemed that V.P. Singh may have been too clever by half, in letting the BJP state Government be the eventual winner.

But lost in the din of their accusations, the warring Janata Dal leaders were in no mood to keep an ear cocked for long-term effects. While the former Union industry minister dubbed his colleagues "rascals who have bartered away the party", the V.P. Singh camp was quick to respond—with spokesman Hari Kishore Singh advising Ajit to take a "short holiday in Agra" which boasts of a mental asylum.

While Ajit's woes may have been exaggerated, there is no doubt that they are considerable. With most of Ajit's supporters having been defeated in the recent by-elections—even in his bastion, Bulandshahr—the party high command struck its first blow. Ajit's protege and Janata Dal Legislature Party (JDLP) leader, Kailash Nath Yadav, who was running a parallel unit in the state, was first served a show-cause notice. At the same time, in Lucknow, 52 MLAs of the V.P. Singh faction, led by Reoti Raman Singh, wrote to Speaker Kesari Nath Tripathi, expressing lack of confidence in Kailash Nath Yadav.

Yadav did exactly as V.P. Singh would have wished. He reacted by expelling 14 MLAs from the Janata Dal. Party President S.R. Bommai pounced on the opportunity to show Yadav the door, noting that in expelling the MLAs, the local chief had exceeded his brief. With the battlelines drawn, Tripathi was asked by both teams to act as umpire.

In the capital, Ajit called a meeting of his supporters, ostensibly to chalk out plans for Chaudhary Charan Singh's birth anniversary. But in reality, it was designed to test his support base. He was in for a nasty surprise. Only five of the party's 59 Lok Sabha members bothered to attend. Buoyed by Ajit's sinking support, V.P. Singh's men scheduled a meeting of the JDLP in Lucknow on December 5. Three days before that, V.P. Singh invited all 22 party MPs from Uttar Pradesh. While 16 attended, some known Ajit supporters, notably Jaunpur MP Arjun Yadav, rang up to pledge their support. V.P. Singh's message to his partymen was brief: it was imperative that they muster support from their MLAs.

The message must have hit home. When the MPs went back to their own constituencies, they got in touch with party MLAs, winning over the fence-sitters with some friendly persuasion. Those who missed out on this

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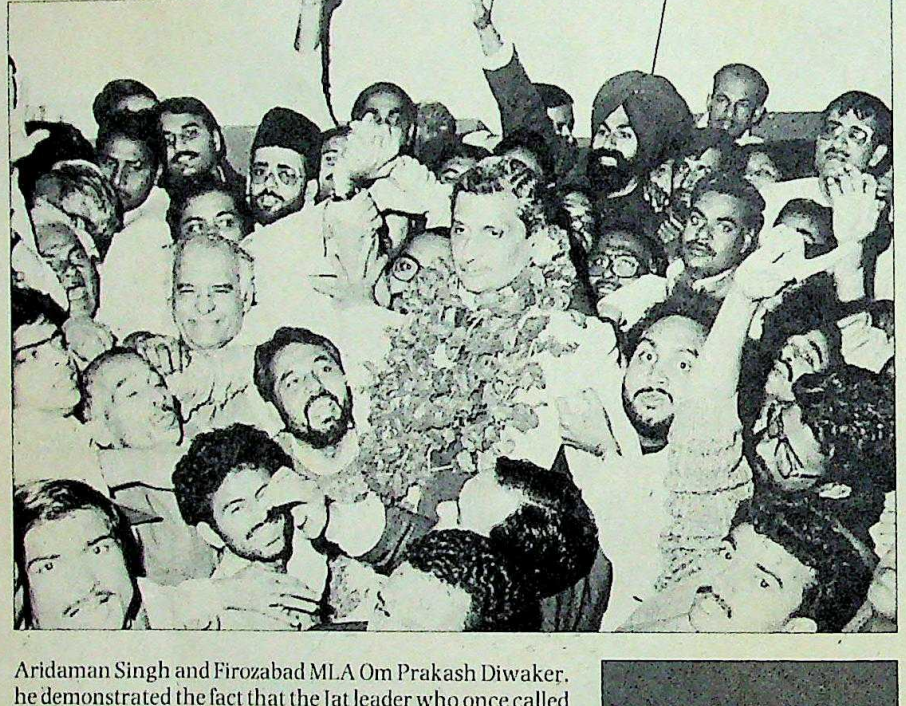
personalised attention received phone calls from the Raja of Manda and his lieutenants in Delhi. Other leaders pitched in: Laloo Prasad Yadav in Patna, Reoti Raman Singh in Lucknow and Sharad Yadav in Delhi.

And when Tripathi maintained, in his December 4 ruling, that Kailash Nath Yadav would continue as leader of the opposition, V.P. Singh sought the assistance of former chief minister and sometime friend, Mulayam Singh Yadav. Eager to settle old scores, Mulayam Singh obliged by getting in touch with a dozen backward caste MLAs. With trusted aide Rasheed Masood, Saharanpur MP and former Union minister, in hospital, Ajit's supporters were sent reeling.

Moreover V.P. Singh pre-empted Ajit Singh's every move. By winning over his supporters, notably Agra MLA

Reoti Raman Singh being cheered after his election

R.K. GUPTA



Aridaman Singh and Firozabad MLA Om Prakash Diwaker, he demonstrated the fact that the Jat leader who once called the whole of western Uttar Pradesh his own, could no longer take his backers for granted. And since Ajit had already forsaken the support of Sharad Yadav and Laloo Yadav, he could not expect any help from them either. V.P. Singh had already seen to it.

But most importantly, V.P. Singh was able to display with consummate ease that those aligning with Ajit Singh would be turning on its head the very thesis of the party. By playing into the Congress(I) and BJP hands, Ajit would be helping those interested in wrecking the very specialised identity of the Janata Dal which has served as an umbrella organisation for the backward castes and minorities. In one stroke, all the years of hard work would be undone.

So the target of the V.P. Singh camp, clearly, was Ajit's total humiliation. This came on December 5 when 56 MLAs along with four MLCs elected Reoti Raman Singh as the leader of the JDLP in Lucknow. The drama had ended: the Janata Dal in the state had split, leaving the BJP laughing at the sidelines and ranged against a divided opposition.

The implications this will have on Ajit's grander designs for the national party are serious. Decimated at home, Ajit is hardly in a position to raise the banner of revolt in the central set-up. Even the clutch of MPs who do back him may now do a re-think. Because, despite the Raja being reduced to a bit player in the Amethi by-election, his plank of social justice remains the only one that will sell. Most of the party MPs and MLAs do, in fact, owe their seats to the Mandal message. As Allahabad MP Saroj Dube puts it: "It's the Raja who got us elected. We will stick by him."

As for Baghpat's hero and Charan Singh's inheritor, the calls for his expulsion from the party are becoming shrill. Says Parliamentary Board Chairman Mufti Mohammed Sayeed: "Discipline must be enforced. This must be a lesson for the future." Others, like Bommai, take a softer line. Not wishing to bloody his own hands, he has left the decision to the political affairs committee and the national executive. He has called a meeting of senior leaders for this, which V.P. Singh and his supporters are not going to attend. The Raja has stopped short of calling for Ajit's head. But his statement—"The party has given its verdict on the issue"—is pregnant with meaning. There are others, however, like George Fernandes, Surendra Mohan, and Biju Patnaik, who want Ajit to stay in the party, mostly to balance the weighty presence of the Yadavs and Ram Vilas Paswan.

The BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh has emerged the real victor as it now faces a splintered opposition.

But if Ajit remains in the Janata Dal fold, it will have to be on V.P. Singh's terms. And sans his Jat following. As Satpal Malik puts it: "He definitely does not inspire the Jats any more." Already, 10 MLAs from western Uttar Pradesh have switched camps. More desertions seem likely. Nor is the Congress(I) tripping over itself to accept Ajit. Says a Union minister: "Let Ajit Singh first settle his problems in his own party. Only then will we think of taking him in." The Congress(I) would prefer to take in Janata Dal MPs rather than Ajit Singh, who might try to re-emerge as a kingmaker in the state's politics.

For now, V.P. Singh savours the taste of victory. But it was close. Had Speaker Tripathi declared the 14 MLAs 'unattached' on the basis of Yadav's expulsion, V.P. Singh's group would have no longer been the main opposition in the state. But it is doubtful whether this fractured Janata Dal will remain a force to reckon with in a state where it once mattered. ■

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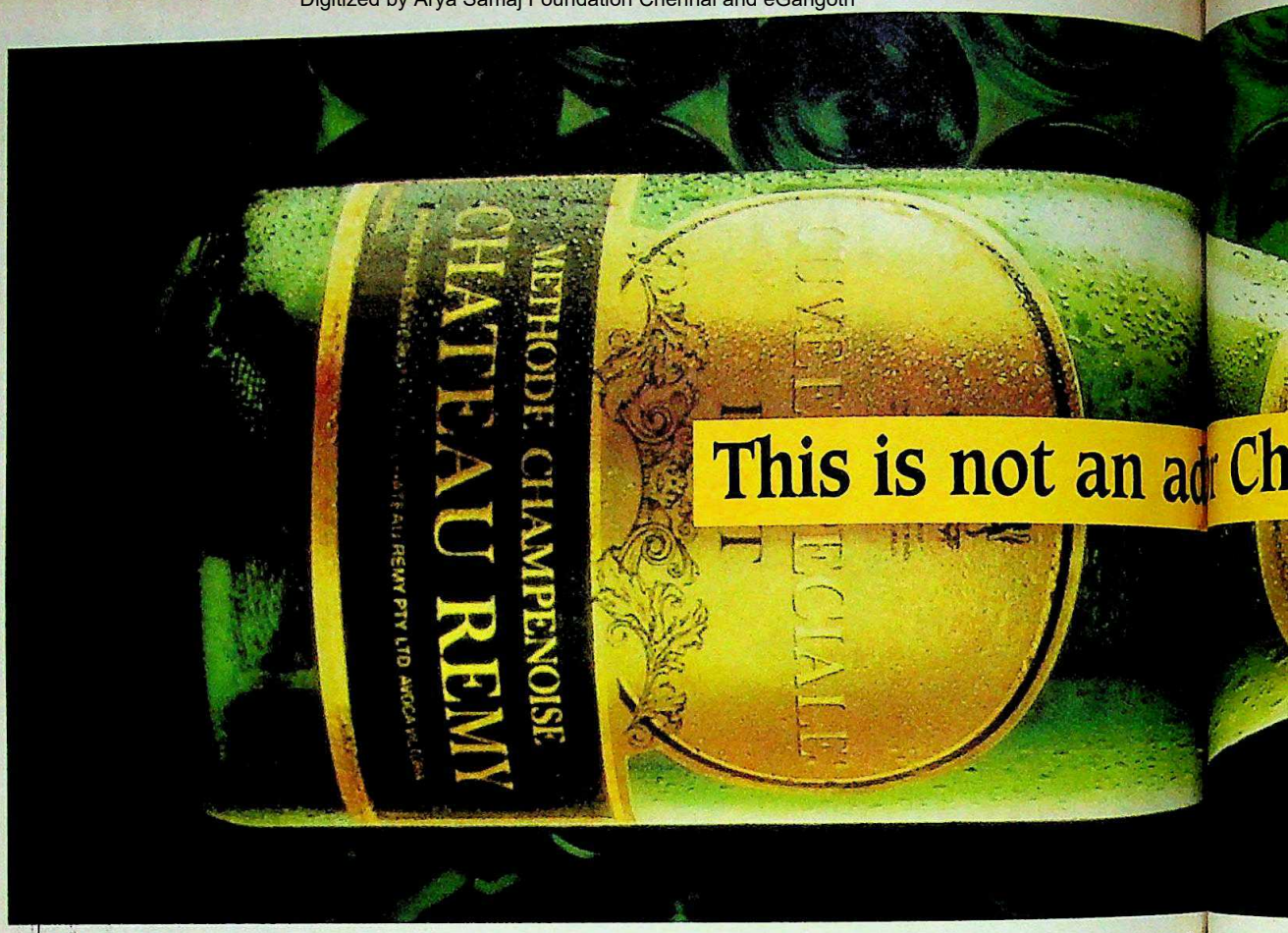

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TAMIL NADU

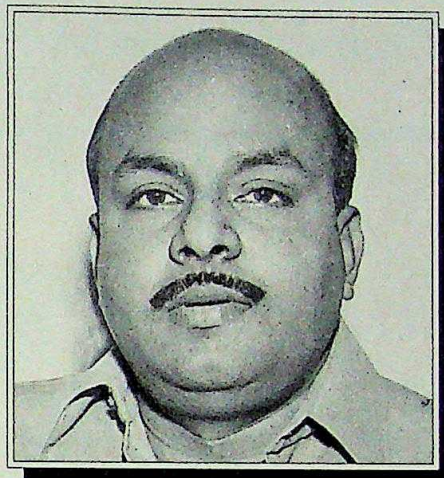
DMK in the Dock

After Nagarajan's sensational testimony which shocked Karunanidhi, the focus shifts to the political fallout of the Rajiv assassination probe.

By PRAKASH M. SWAMY

FORMER Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi's sins of omission, if not commission, in letting the LTTE entrench itself in the state, have come home to roost. With the detained former home secretary R. Nagarajan taking refuge in a bureaucrat's last defence—that he only did the political bosses' bidding—the whole state has been agog with speculation on Karunanidhi's arrest. Determined to flatten the already reeling DMK chief, the Jayalalitha Government has lined up arrests of several party bigwigs as well as police officers and bureaucrats who served under him. With full-fledged rebellion in the DMK a possibility, the focus in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination probe has clearly shifted to the political fallout in the state.

The police are taking Nagarajan's statement, given last fortnight before the Tiruchi magistrate, seriously. He was the all-important man in Karunanidhi's administration. He has said that all the TADA charges against him—including orally telling the Madras DCP not to pursue the killers of EPRLF leader Padmanabha who was shot in Madras—were not administrative lapses but of a political nature. He has squarely blamed Karunanidhi and the former chief secretary and now sports secretary at the Centre, M.M. Rajendran, for the Tigers turning Tamil Nadu into their den. His patricidal lunge at his mentor is a dramatic turnaround. He is likely to become approver in the case. The sharp rift was evident when Karunanidhi did not even visit him in jail.



Nagarajan has blamed the DMK government for letting the Tigers make the state their den.

Though under TADA Nagarajan's statement can be used to book others, and the Q Branch of the state police claim they have prima facie evidence against Karunanidhi, he may not be arrested at this stage. Those familiar with Jayalalitha's style believe that she will not allow him earn any sympathy as a 'martyr'. Instead, she will let him be used as a dart-board by the media and the public.

Out on a limb, Karunanidhi is still digging himself in. He declared Nagarajan's statement was doctored. And reiterated that he never had any truck with the militants. Said the DMK supremo: "Although we have been sympathetic towards the problems of the Sri Lankan Tamils, neither our party nor our government allowed any militant

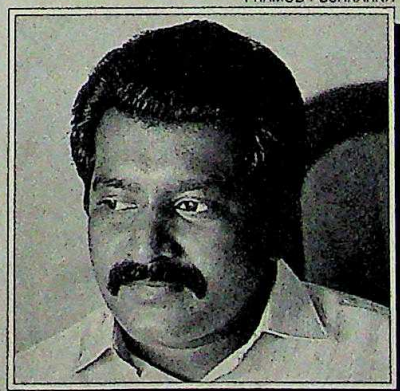
SIT PROBE

Top Targets

THE SIT is getting ready to frame charges against the LTTE chieftain V. Pirabhakaran for ordering Rajiv's assassination. But while it withdraws from Tamil Nadu, the floodgates of investigations into other LTTE killings in the state have opened. To enquire into them, the Jayalalitha Government has set up a Tamil Nadu Special Investigation Team (TANSIT).

A major new lead to Pirabhakaran came from Murugan—part of Sivarasan's group—who confessed he carried out the job following instructions from the LTTE headquarters. The intercepted letter of Santhan, LTTE's liaison man in India, to his chief stating that the 'orders' had been carried out, will also be used in the SIT charge-sheet which will be ready by March-end.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Pirabhakaran: new lead

Meanwhile, a useful catch was Srikanth. On a tip-off from him, T. Marimuthu, a DMK functionary, was picked up. The Q Branch is also zeroing in on Karunanidhi's son, Azhagiri, whose friend, George, was in the van used by the LTTE when a policeman and a civilian were shot dead. A watch was also being kept on Madras Port Trust Chairman A. Balraj in whose guest-house Karunanidhi met LTTE leaders.

It is to interrogate the bigwigs that TANSIT has been formed. A brainchild of DGP S. Sripal, it will be headed by IG P.C. Pant. So, the scope of the hunt started by SIT has only widened. —PRAKASH M. SWAMY

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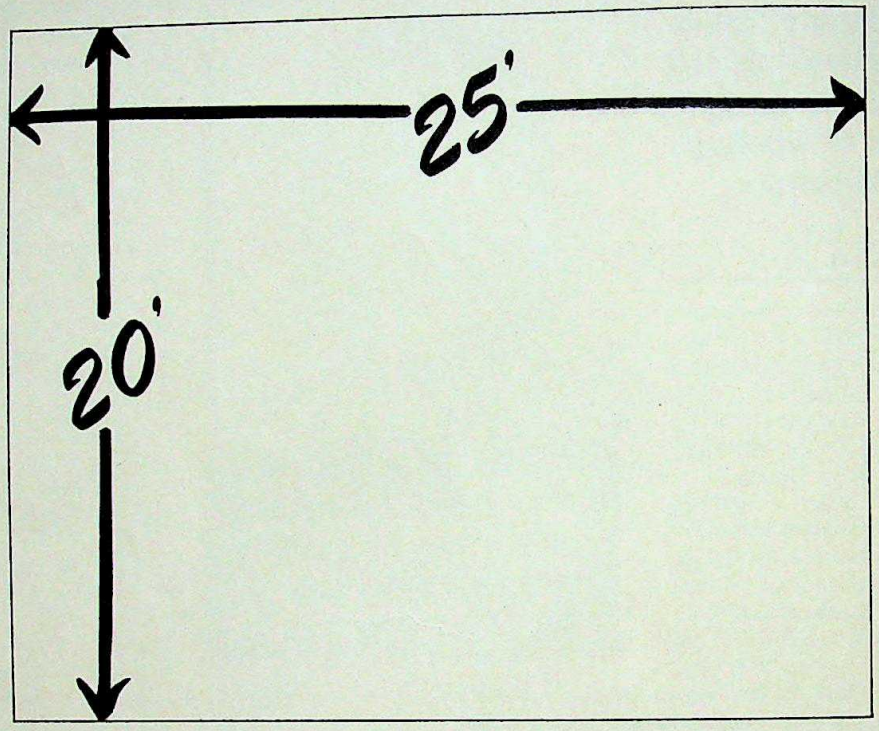

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S.O.S. SAVE ON SOMETHING.

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group to take advantage of that sympathy."

The officials, however, even link him, if tendentiously, with the Rajiv killing. They argue that by letting the Padmanabha killers escape, the DMK government had emboldened the LTTE to chalk out its plan to finish off Rajiv. Pointing out how the Q Branch has in a short time booked all the Padmanabha case accused, they claim that given a free hand, it could have nipped the LTTE menace in the bud.

BUT whether charges against Karunanidhi stick, Jayalalitha's offensive this time smacks of witch-hunting. Nagarajan was targeted even earlier. He was suspended from service pending disciplinary action. Former state DGP, Paul Dorai, who had rubbed Jayalalitha the wrong way, was to be booked too when he died *(see box)*.

Besides, as Karunanidhi pointed out, the AIADMK under MGR had itself backed the LTTE. About Jayalalitha's duplicity, he said: "Even when the IPKF operation was on, she had said it would be impossible to safeguard the interests of Tamils in Sri Lanka without including the LTTE. She also wanted an invitation sent out to Pirabhakaran for talks." It's out of political vendetta, Karunanidhi alleged, that the Jayalalitha Government has virtually declared an emergency in the state, is exercising TADA illegally, and foisting false cases on DMK supporters.

SHARAD SAXENA

While Karunanidhi charged Jayalalitha with political vendetta, the chief minister trod carefully to avoid making him a martyr.

While Karunanidhi indulged in bile and bluster, the DMK found itself in the dock. Some of the people implicated by Nagarajan and likely to be interrogated include: Karunanidhi's son, M.K. Azhagiri, and nephew, Murasoli Maran, former Union minister; former ministers Subbulakshmi Jagadeesan, Thangavelu and Sundaram. Other targets besides Rajendran include Ranjith Singh, then Chengalpattu DIG, and Jaffer Ali, former DIG (Intelligence).

The DMK is clearly wilting under pressure. Party circles fear that the top leadership will use V. Gopalaswamy—whose brother, Ravichandran, is under arrest—as a scapegoat. The exit of Gopalaswamy, an influential leader, could lead to a split in the party. Political observers, however, wager that some former ministers and second-rung leaders may cross over to the AIADMK to escape persecution.

Meanwhile, support for Karunanidhi's condemnation of misuse of TADA has come from the lawyer community. Under TADA, not only giving any help or moral support to terrorists but also advising them earns the wrath of its sweeping provisions. It's for pleading LTTE members' cases in courts that Veerasekharan was booked, the lawyers allege. Naturally, they are up in arms against the Government.

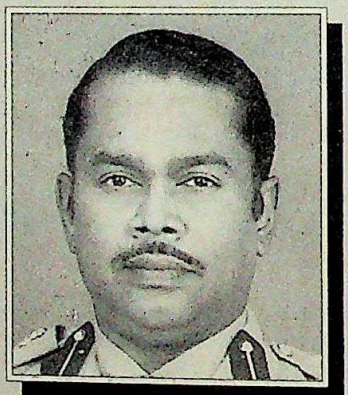
But that would be little consolation for Karunanidhi, perhaps fighting his last battle for survival. He does have some mass support left though: the day Doordarshan carried the news item on Nagarajan's testimony, there was widespread vandalism keeping buses off the road. But the majority public sentiment, in a state still recovering from the Sriperumbudur outrage, is against him. Armed with this knowledge, the lethal lady ensconced in Fort St George is fearlessly leading a *coup de grace* against her rival. ■

PAUL DORAI

Fatal Links

ALONG with Karunanidhi and Nagarajan, he had formed the power troika. So, when Dorai, retired state DGP, got to know of Nagarajan's likely arrest, he was crestfallen. He feared the worst: the Q Branch had suspected his involvement in scotching proceedings against the Padmanabha killers. He died soon after, which gave rise to rumours that he had committed suicide.

His family members, however, hotly discount the suicide theory. They say Dorai was a diabetic. On that fateful night, wife Ambujam relates, he complained of chest pain and breathed his last in a nursing home. The body was cremated the next day even though he was a Christian. No post-mortem was done. With Dorai's death many questions will remain unanswered. For instance, had the DMK government given him any specific orders to go slow on the hunt for Padmanabha's killers?



Former DGP: suspect death

Ambujam, a schoolteacher, now alleges that her husband was being persecuted. A day before he died, he was summoned by the tax authorities looking into his acquiring 19 acres of prime land near Madras. The argument of his friends goes like this: Dorai was the city police commissioner when his men seized a letter written by Jayalalitha announcing her retirement from politics. The circulation of the letter embarrassed her. Since then she nursed a grudge against Dorai.

—PRAKASH M. SWAMY

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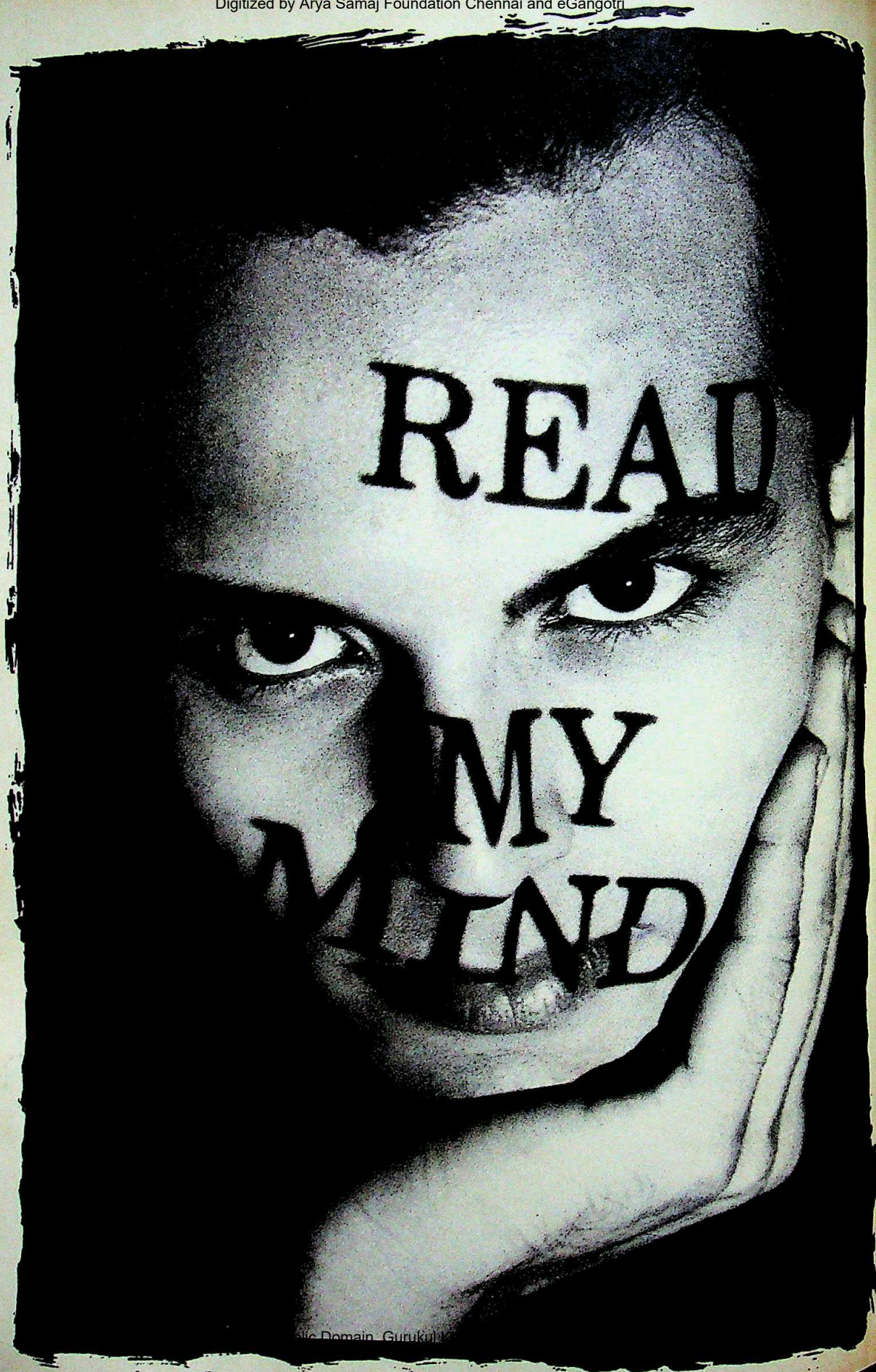

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ANDHRA PRADESH

A Grave Divide

The burial of eight Harijans who died in the August carnage becomes an inflammatory issue in the Reddy-dominated Tsundur village.

By SOURISH BHATTACHARYYA
in Tsundur

THE past, like Banquo's ghost, continues to haunt Tsundur. The residents of this paddy-rich Andhra Pradesh village, still tormented by the August 6 massacre of eight Harijans by members of the Reddy community, are being pushed towards another confrontation: ironically, over the remains of the victims.

At the centre of the controversy is the 100-square-foot plot where the victims—all third- or fourth-generation Christian converts—were buried three days after the carnage, in the presence of senior Guntur district officials. A patch of scraggly grass and shrubs now ringed by armed policemen, the plot—christened *raktakshetram* (the field of blood)—lies just 200 metres away from the Ram and Shiva temples of the local Reddys. And it's inflaming passions in the irreparably divided village.

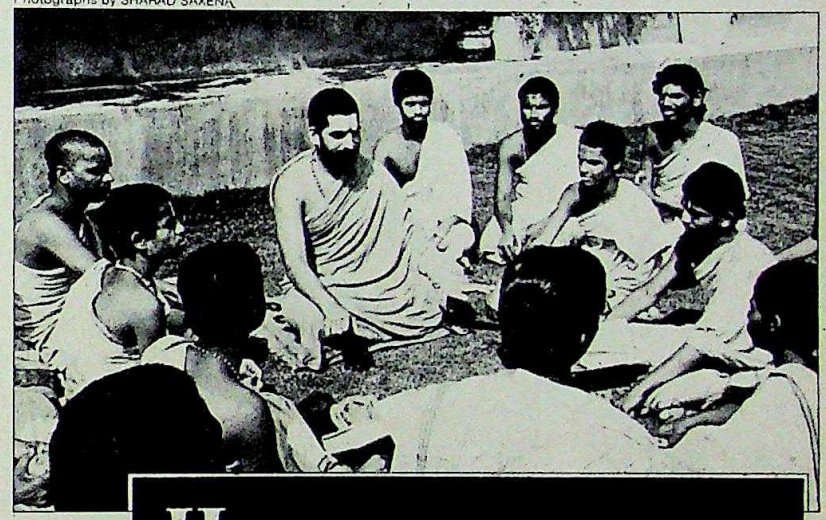
The Reddys, 219 of whom face charges ranging from rioting to homicide, are accusing the Harijans of deliberately trying to defile the village shrines. Leading their campaign to get the bodies removed is a young swami from nearby Sitanagaram, who sports the grandiose title of His Holiness Tridandi Chinna Srimannarayana Ramanuja Jeer Swamiji.

"The Harijans have their own burial ground. Why didn't they bury the victims there?" asks he, in the midst of the constant chanting of Vedic hymns by his teenaged acolytes. "They even buried the dead a foot under the ground, when the prescribed norm is 6 feet." The Tridandi Jeer, as he is popularly known, has visited the village twice—on September 25 and October 1, but on both occasions the Harijans refused to hold a meeting with him.

Comments state Bahujan Samaj Party General Secretary Bojja Tharakam, who's leading a statewide agitation against the escalation of violence against the Harijans: "The victims were buried there with the approval of the collector and the SP. And what the swami omits to say is that the nearest official burial ground is about 10 km away. We'll resist him with force."

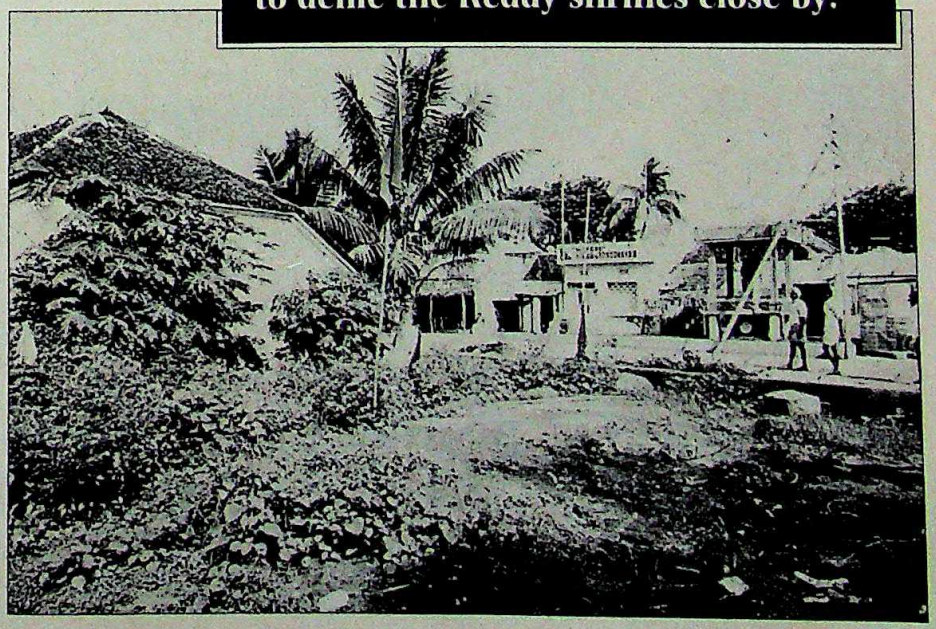
Meanwhile, the social chasm in the

Photographs by SHARAD SAXENA



Harijan activists strongly deny the Tridandi Jeer's allegation that the location of the burial site is an attempt to defile the Reddy shrines close by.

Tridandi Jeer with his disciples (above); and the burial site



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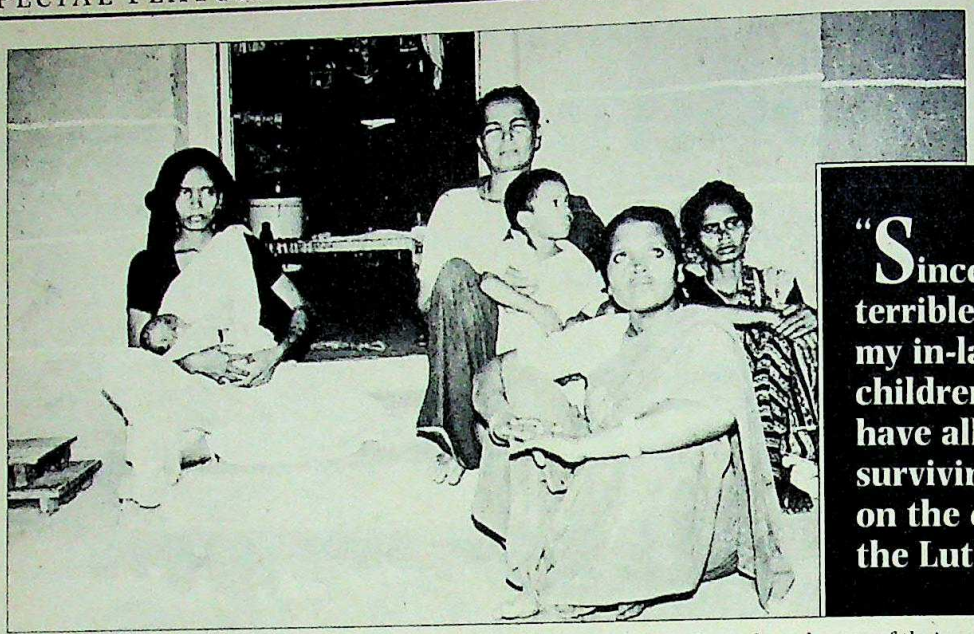

Samadanam, 23, farm worker and widow of massacre victim Isaac

"Since that terrible night, my in-laws, my children and I have all been surviving only on the charity of the Lutherans."

village is becoming deeper. The Reddys have stopped employing Harijans in their paddy fields, now turning golden in anticipation of the harvest.

"We are getting our work done by the *dhobis*," says a sullen Sarojini Reddy, 35, the youngest daughter-in-law of Malla Reddy, who was killed in the retaliatory attack by the Harijans after the carnage. Defending the August 6 attack, for which her husband Siva Reddy has been charge-sheeted, she says: "The Harijan boys would invariably molest our girls when they would go to school. How much longer could we tolerate this?"

AMPLIFYING the molestation charge, the Tridandi Jeer says: "Unemployed Harijan youth were not only teasing the Reddy girls, but also kidnapping Reddy brides on the eve of their marriage—there were about 15 such cases in the last three years." Harijan leaders dismiss these charges as a *post facto* justification of a massacre that cannot be condoned.

Sarojini Reddy, 35, whose husband, Siva Reddy, is among the 163 persons charge-sheeted by the police

"Harijan boys invariably molested our girls on their way to school. How long could we tolerate this? We'll never employ them."

Harijanwada residents are already feeling the effects of the Reddy boycott. Says agricultural worker Samadanam, 23, whose 25-year-old husband Isaac was hacked and shot to death: "Since that terrible night, my in-laws, my three children and I have been surviving only because of the charity of the Lutherans."

The growing militancy of the Reddys has heightened the fears of the Harijans that with the recent by-elections going the Congress(I) way, the Reddy-dominated state Government would push the Tsundur case under the wraps. Asks Tharakam, who's also an advocate: "How can we have faith in the law when even the trial of the 1985 Karamchedu massacre accused hasn't begun?"

Yet, Harijan rights activists assert they'll continue to exert pressure on Hyderabad—even New Delhi. Says B.M. Leela Kumar, 22, a Dalit Mahila Sangham activist camping in Tsundur for the past three months: "Why haven't the police arrested the key accused, the lame Mallikarjuna Reddy? There are over 200 witnesses waiting to be heard."

For the Harijanwada residents, the real challenge is to ensure they are not compelled to relive the Karamchedu experience. They want their past to be a lesson for all—that the Harijans' best protection is their power to resist. ■

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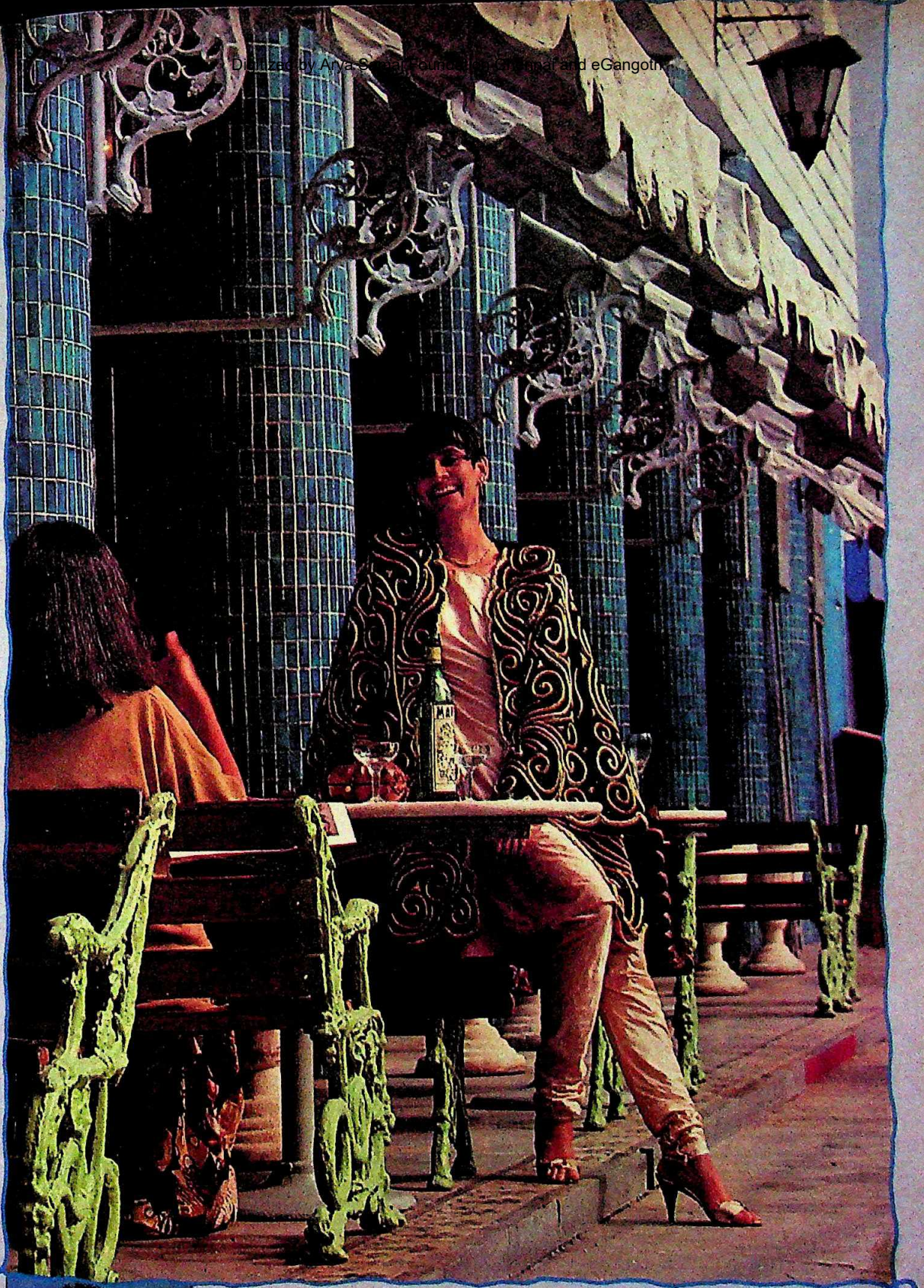

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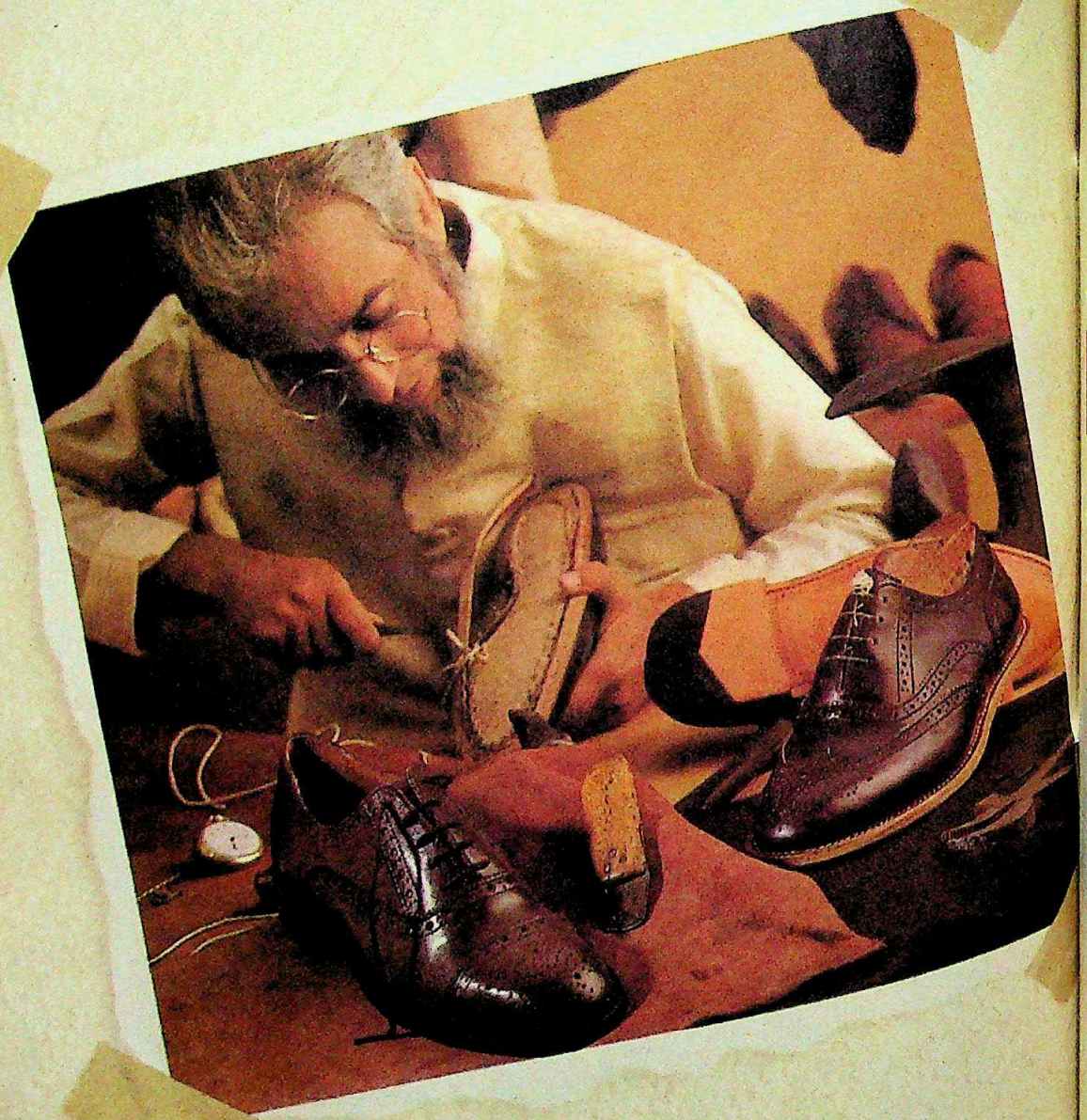

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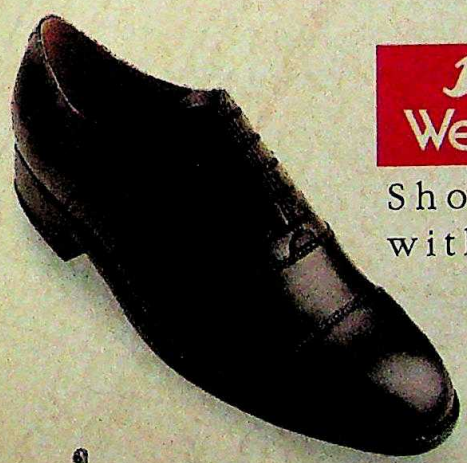

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CAUVERY DISPUTE

Political Trade-off

Bangarappa takes a beating in the war over water

EVEN as the Cauvery dispute swirls dangerously, its political implications threaten to break the riverbanks. As the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu chief ministers descended on New Delhi last fortnight, it was water which was ostensibly discussed. But politics dominated behind the scenes. Both Jayalalitha and S. Bangarappa tried to outmanoeuvre each other.

Beleaguered by intra-party dissidence in his state, Bangarappa met Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao with an all-party delegation of 100 members, hoping to blunt the edge that state Congress(I) opponents gained when the Supreme Court shot down his June ordinance. The court's upholding of the Cauvery Water Dispute Tribunal interim order had given Bangarappa's rivals a new impetus for dissent. And when on December 11, the Central Government informed Parliament that it had notified the tribunal's interim order, directing Karnataka to release 205 thousand million cubic feet of water to Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, his troubles were truly in full flood. The spontaneous protests in many parts of the Cauvery basin, and bandhs in Mysore as well as Mandya, even as news of the Centre's move came in, were indications of this.

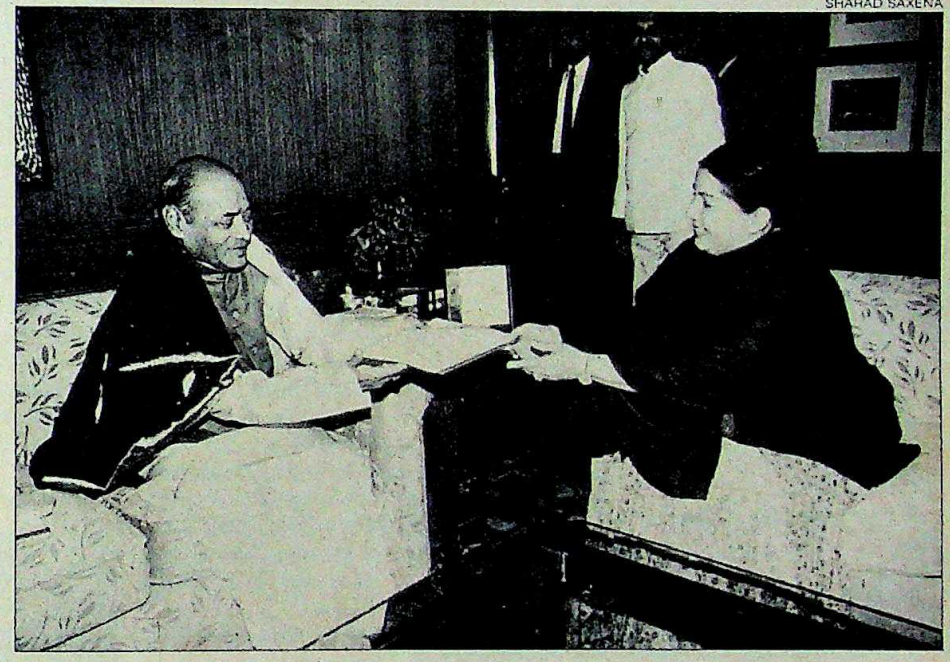
By pressing Narasimha Rao not to gazette the interim order, the chief minister hoped to silence the growing griping within his own party. When he paraded his team before the press at Karnataka Bhavan in Delhi, the message to Narasimha Rao was clear. If Bangarappa were to be dislodged from power, it would mean trouble for him. Admitted rebel Congress(I) MP, H. Hanumanthappa: "If Bangarappa goes now, he will turn a martyr." But by meeting Narasimha Rao separately with a delegation of 26 Karnataka MPs, Union Railway Minister C.K. Jaffer Sharief and Minister of State for Personnel Margaret Alva stole the thunder. Bangarappa could only muster seven MPs and three Central ministers for his show of strength.

He also had to contend with the open and embarrassing revolt of state Rural Development Minister K.H. Patil. Said Patil at a press conference: "The interests of the state cannot be protected under Bangarappa's leadership." Bangarappa could only complain against him to Narasimha Rao and ask his permission to sack Patil, which was denied.

In total contrast, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram, who came earlier, sailed smoothly through the capital. Unlike in July, when she had virtually launched a war against the Centre, Jayalalitha expressed total confidence in the prime minister and left the settlement of the dispute to him.

When she met Narasimha Rao separately for 45 minutes, she concentrated on Tamil Nadu politics and her personal anxieties. And in a straightforward quid pro quo, got a lot of promises from the prime minister. She wanted her National Security Guard cover to continue and a firm assurance from the prime minister on this. Narasimha Rao obliged but only on the condition that she would not rush into arresting DMK leader M. Karunanidhi. Jayalalitha also wanted a lid put on the Congress(I)'s politicking in the state and a hike in allotment of rice by one lakh tonnes from the Central pool for public distribution. With Union Minister of State for Commerce P. Chidambaram joining her all-party delegation, it was clear that confrontation is farthest from her mind.

SHARAD SAXENA



Rao with Jayalalitha: give and take

With the notification, Bangarappa has lost more ground to rebels, while Jayalalitha is sitting pretty.

With that, things have never looked better for Jayalalitha in the state. But Bangarappa has clearly lost the battle for water. Perhaps, even the war of survival. His opponents in Delhi claim that he will now try to create trouble for the Centre. Congress(I) dissidents are likely to ask the Karnataka chief minister to step down for his "failure to protect Karnataka's interests". The balked chief minister's reaction remains a guess. But speculation is rife that he may quit the Congress(I), float a regional party, and align with other state regional parties to keep himself in power.

—ZAFAR AGHA and SARITHA RAI

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MAHARASHTRA

Maimed Tiger

Sena faces first-ever rebellion

THE tiger can barely suppress a snarl. With a major split staring the Shiv Sena in the face for the first time in its 25-year history, party supremo Bal Thackeray is an angry—and worried—man. And with very good reason. His carefully built monolith has developed cracks.

The man ready to push the party over the edge is Chhagan Bhujbal, the Sena MLA from Mazagon. Last fortnight, he dramatically announced he was quitting the Sena and forming a separate group, the Shiv Sena(B). He threatened to take with him 17 of the 52 Sena legislators, and submitted a letter to Speaker Madhukarrao Chaudhary announcing their exit from the party. Chaudhary accepted it causing pandemonium in the state Assembly.

Bhujbal: breaking away

HEMANT PITHWA

The state Congress(I) is said to have engineered the splintering in the Sena to embarrass Thackeray.

Thackeray was furious. He lashed back by expelling Bhujbal within 24 hours. Sixteen of the rebellious legislators came to heel and retracted their statement after hectic parleying by Sena leaders Manohar Joshi and Pramod Navalkar, heads of the Opposition in the Assembly and Legislative Council. The Speaker refused to accept the retraction. Thackeray threatened to go to court. Meanwhile Bhujbal still claims his Shiv Sena(B) has the tacit support of 25 MLAs. Says Rajendra Gode, one of his supporters: "We are firm on our decision not to go back. All those who have done so have done it at the point of the dagger and gun."

The party may have been able to tide over the current crisis, but the problems are far from over. As Navalkar said: "Never before has this happened. The rift has come to the surface. It's a shock wave." However, the shock wave has been swelling for a while. The rift was a culmination of a mutual antagonism between Bhujbal and Joshi. As Gode says: "Our fight is not with Balasaheb but with Joshi and the others who hijacked the Sena." Since March this year, Bhujbal has been demanding the post of Opposition leader in the Assembly, which Joshi has held after the February 1990 assembly polls. Claims he: "Joshi is always ready to compromise with Sharad Pawar."

But Pawar is said to be one of the hands engineering the split. Apparently, the errant MLAs—many of whom are ex-Congressmen—had been veering towards the defence minister who had been promising them a homecoming. Thackeray has warned Chief Minister Sudhakarrao Naik that his tactics will boomerang.

Morever, Bhujbal, a *mali* by caste, has been smarting ever since Thackeray dismissed the Mandal Commission recommendations as "Mandal-*bandal*". He was emboldened by the fact that the Sena did well electorally in the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions due to OBC support. Says Gode: "The nine Sena MLAs from the Vidarbha region are supporting Bhujbal."

The rebels in the Sena have been tamed right now—but for how long?

—LEKHA RATTANANI

BIHAR

Red Herring

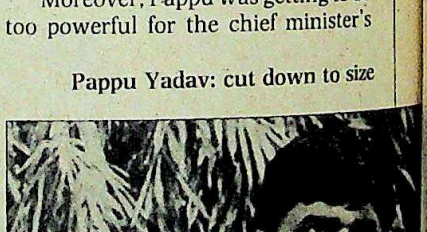
Don held to check criticism

CHIEF ministers are known by the company they keep. But Laloo Prasad Yadav wasn't one to take any chances. So, when Independent MLA Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav's friendship became embarrassing for him, he dropped him like a hot brick. Last fortnight, Pappu, the don from the Madhepura-Saharsa belt, was arrested by the Government. Declared Laloo: "Nobody's above the law."

However, Laloo was only trying to wriggle out of a potentially uncomfortable situation. By arresting Pappu under the National Security Act for rioting and provoking a caste war, he was only taking the wind out of the Opposition's sails. The Congress(I) was planning to take the Government to task for the terror unleashed by Pappu. Complained Pappu, in a martyr-like tone: "During the by-elections, I did so much for the chief minister."

Moreover, Pappu was getting to be too powerful for the chief minister's comfort. Apparently, he had ambitions of emerging as a national leader with a base among the Yadavs. By also ordering the arrest of Pappu's political rival Anand Mohan, Laloo has demonstrated Yadav supremacy. Many forwards were veering towards Anand Mohan Singh, a Rajput, engaged in a caste war with Pappu. Said Laloo in his inimitable style: "Two rats have been fighting in the Saharsa-Madhepura area."

Pappu Yadav: cut down to size



Clearly, the chief minister has left no doubt about who's the boss in Bihar.

—FARZAND AHMED

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Joshi at Kanyakumari: controversial

EKTA YATRA

Sticky Start

Poor response to BJP voyage

GOING by the billing it received and the previews it got, the Ekta Yatra's initial response could only be dubbed lukewarm. Graced by the presence of the BJP's leading lights, but only 5,000 other indifferent bystanders, party President Murli Manohar Joshi set off from the beaches of Kanyakumari for a 46-day journey to Srinagar. But the innocuous inauguration seemed miles away from the heat and dust the issue was generating in New Delhi.

With the all-party meeting last fortnight expressing concern about the yatra's implications on the communal situation in the country, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao is doing his best to walk warily. His initial attempt to dissuade the BJP from going ahead with the yatra, however, failed, with senior leader L.K. Advani arguing at the meeting that it was "too late to cancel the yatra". Advani later told newspersons that an attempt was being made to isolate the BJP, but the party would resist it.

Intelligence agencies have already warned the Home Ministry of possible communal tension. But the prime minister is on the horns of a dilemma: if Joshi's yatra, ostensibly aimed at promoting unity and integrity, is stopped, the BJP will start a countrywide agitation, accusing the Government of being soft on secessionism.

Should he not, Narasimha Rao's rivals within the Congress(I)—especially Union ministers Sharad Pawar and Arjun Singh who advocated a tough line against the BJP in the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) meeting—will dub him as being soft on communalism. At the all-party meeting too, apart from the BJP, there was a consensus that the prime minister should not accept the BJP invitation to participate in the unfurling of the tricolour in Srinagar on January 26. And he, it seems, has been convinced against going.

For now, the CCPA has decided to let the yatra progress, at least till Jammu. As Joshi's DCM Toyota van-turned-houseboat wends it way across 15,000 km, through 14 states, the party hopes that its luck will change.

—ZAFAR AGHA and ANAND VISWANATHAN in Kanyakumari

ANDHRA PRADESH

Gory Gimmick

Report damages NTR's image

THE man who played the hero in umpteen films seems to have been cast as a villain in a real-life potboiler. An inquiry has revealed that the knife attack eight years ago on N.T. Rama Rao, then Andhra Pradesh chief minister, was just a gimmick, staged to bolster his public image. And the assailant Babji, a Telugu Desam supporter, did not commit suicide. He was murdered. Worse, the NTR government tried to hush up the homicide.

These revelations have been made in the Justice C. Sriramulu Commission report, excerpts of which were released last fortnight. Congress(I) Chief Minister N. Janardhana Reddy ordered a fresh police probe into Babji's mysterious death four years ago. Congressmen demanded NTR's resignation from the Assembly and the chairmanship of the National Front.

While NTR may be placid, his party is worried. Some Telugu Desam MLAs decried the Congress(I) offensive as "a calculated attempt to discredit NTR".

But the full report—a copy of which was secured by INDIA TODAY—found that sub-inspector J. Sambasiva Rao, now dead, put the probe "on a wrong track to suppress the names of NTR and Chandrababu Naidu, NTR's son-in-law, who figured in a letter by Babji, from becoming public". Sriramulu's verdict is that NTR's thumb injury was self-inflicted—Babji was carrying a mere pen-knife. Babji was framed by the police later, he held.

The commission also found that NTR had extracted a confession from Babji. The chances of tracing Babji's killers are now bleak. But, for the man nicknamed Drama Rao, the episode will remain an all-time flop.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

PROBE COMMISSION FINDINGS

- **NTR's thumb injury was self-inflicted—Babji only carried a pen-knife.**
- **NTR extracted a confession from Babji.**
- **Babji did not commit suicide. Also, the probe into his murder was scotched.**

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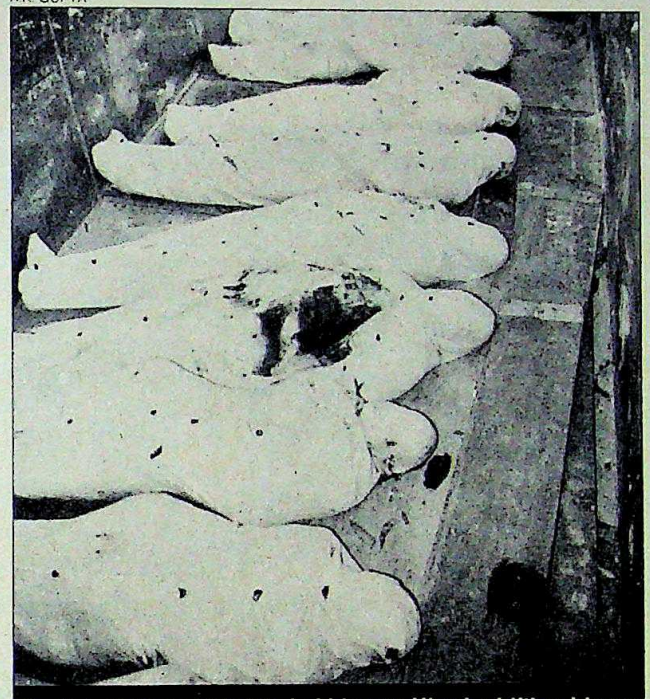
TERRORISM

Striking Out

Spate of killings exposes security loopholes

R.K. GUPTA



Bodies of those killed in Lakhimpur-Kheri: shifting blame

LAST fortnight's attacks by Sikh militants in the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh have sent a chill through the state which has nothing to do with winter. In the space of a week, they gunned down 26 people in Pilibhit and Lakhimpur-Kheri districts, without even the hint of a challenge from the state police.

That is not all. According to the residents, there have been a dozen kidnappings over the past month in Naini Tal and Pilibhit districts, none of which has been reported. Fear has struck the people deeply. They are now in no mood to risk any information to the police.

As for the local police, the entry of Babbar Khalsa into the Terai is giving them sleepless nights. The Sikh militant group used a powerful remote control device to kill three policemen on December 1 at Hazara and then massacred seven people in Neoria in Pilibhit on December 5. According to eyewitnesses, the firing continued for more than an hour but the three police pickets nearby missed it.

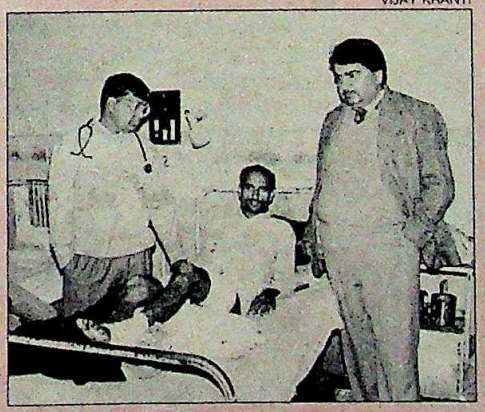
Part of the problem is that there are yawning gaps in the area's policing, especially when it comes to security of commuters. In the 15 strikes in the seven districts of the region in the past month, the police have not been able to engage the terrorists even once. There is such uncertainty in the administration that even day patrols on highways and in the forests seem to have been called off. But DGP Prakash Singh defends his men: "Basically, terrorism has not been our problem. But our boys are almost ready to meet the challenge."

Chief Minister Kalyan Singh continues to lay the blame for the spreading menace on "previous governments". But, of the 206 terrorist victims this year, 169 have been killed in the past five months since the BJP Government was elected to power. As for establishing a task force with its headquarters in Bareilly, the state Government has been slow to implement its decision. Although local police officials have been pressing the state Government for helicopters to periodically scan the 600-sq km Terai forest for terrorists, the proposal has been struck down. By repeatedly demanding paramilitary protection from the Centre, the BJP Government is obviously trying to pass the buck to the Centre. But for now, Narasimha Rao's Government at the Centre seems content to let the Uttar Pradesh Government stew in its own cauldron. —DILIP AWASTHI

HARYANA

Deadly Echo

VIJAY KRANTI



Tohana hospital ward: open fury

AS in the Terai region, so in Haryana, since the launching of Operation Rakshak II in Punjab, there has been a spurt in the bloodflow. And last fortnight, it threatened to sweep over the town of Tohana, bordering Punjab.

Renting a Maruti car from a local transporter, four Sikh militants drove into Mehru market on the outskirts of Tohana, killing 26 people. What added salt to the people's wounds was the 'blatant inaction' of the police. As over a dozen residents said, the police were put on alert within five minutes of the first shot. But no help showed up for over 20 minutes. When Chief Minister Bhajan Lal visited the area next morning, he had to face the accumulated wrath of the locals. An angry Bhajan Lal rapped senior administration and police officials, while transferring the local DSP and SHO and suspending an ASI. Then, three days after the massacre, the police killed five 'terrorists' said to be responsible for it.

With the Punjab border just a couple of kilometres away, Tohana was an obvious target. As Harish Kumar, Hissar SP, says: "Stringent army action in Punjab has put Sikh terrorists under heavy pressure. This, in turn, has put the pressure on us." According to him, the state police have decided to seal all entrances to Haryana along the Bhakra canal and arm all posts with light machine guns. But it will need more than that to silence the militants' gunfire and restore the faith of Tohana residents.

—VIJAY KRANTI in Tohana

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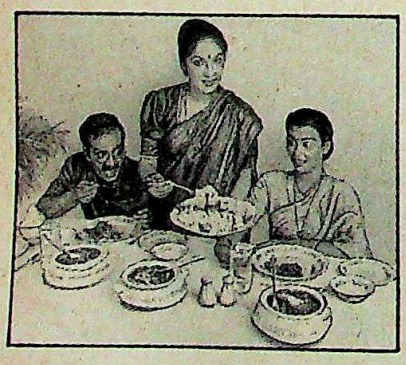

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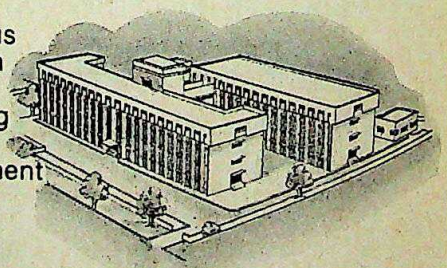

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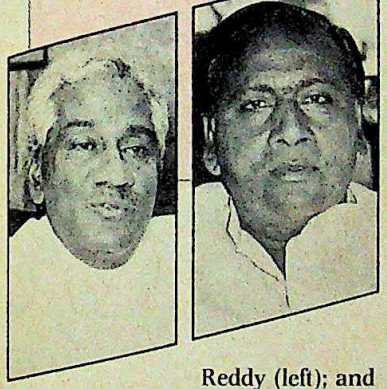
CONGRESS(I)

Southern Squabbles

Dissensions rock state units before party polls

INFIGHTING seems to have become an integral part of the Congress(I). And with the party's organisational elections scheduled to be held for the first time in two decades, the battle for supremacy within the state party units has reached fever-pitch. Dissension has riven the party particularly in all the southern states. While the fight over S. Bangarappa's continuation in Karnataka festers, in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, party leaders—including chief ministers N. Janardhana Reddy and K. Karunakaran—are making a desperate bid to wrest the advantage in the run-up to the party polls.

ANDHRA PRADESH



Reddy (left); and Rao: sparring partners

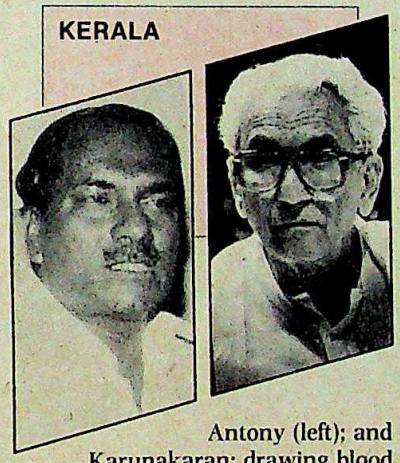
CONGRESS(I) leaders in the prime minister's home state are sparring away. Slugging it out here are Chief Minister Janardhana Reddy and PCC(I) chief V. Hanumantha Rao. In fact, the two have been engaged in a game of oneupmanship from the day Reddy took office.

Last fortnight, with party polls on the anvil, the simmering tension between the two came to a boil. Rao refused to accept the list of newly enrolled members from Reddy's Nellore district, arguing that it had been presented after the November 18 deadline.

Clearly, Reddy's calculation that elections would be postponed yet again misfired badly. He then tried to stall the polls, alleging fake lists had been prepared. He also claimed the list of district returning officers was decided by the AICC(I) observer Rafiq Alam at Rao's behest. Reddy has since got 14 of the 23 returning officers changed.

Rao wasn't one to take things lying down. He accused Reddy of trying to make the PCC(I) more pliable. The impasse continues, waiting for Narasimha Rao's intervention. The prime minister will ensure elections are held on schedule. His personal stake: he's enrolled from his native Vangara village, and wants to be elected as an AICC(I) delegate from Andhra Pradesh.

KERALA



Antony (left); and Karunakaran: drawing blood

A renewed battle between traditional rivals Chief Minister K. Karunakaran and PCC(I) chief A.K. Antony is threatening to bring down the Congress(I)-led UDF Government. The cause in Kerala too was the party polls scheduled for December 15.

Karunakaran wanted to put up his own candidate to challenge Antony's re-election. Antony's camp-followers too started saying Karunakaran was not the undisputed leader. Antony also took the duel to Delhi. Last month, he met Congress(I) President P.V. Narasimha Rao with a list of complaints. Chief among them was corruption against the UDF ministers. Back in Kerala, Antony launched a tirade against the chief minister's autocratic functioning. But denying the charge, Karunakaran said he had been securing approval for all his decisions from the UDF liaison committee.

Amidst this feuding, reports of group clashes in party ranks started pouring in. In Kasargod district, Mahila Congress workers from the Antony faction were roughed up by the rival camp. And in Trichur district, Karunakaran's followers attacked a pro-Antony protest march.

Evidently, Karunakaran has been taking Antony head-on in the hope that the high command will back him. But, with 22 Congress(I) MLAs loyal to him, Antony can rock the UDF Ministry. The Karunakaran camp did accuse Antony of hobnobbing with the LDF. Alarmed, the prime minister summoned Antony to Delhi. Given Narasimha Rao's consensus politics, the high command is expected to call a truce between the two titans.

TAMIL NADU

Moopanar (left); and Ramamurthy: at cross-purposes

THE battlelines have been drawn. Pitted against each other are the two rival factions within the TNCC(I), one led by party President K. Ramamurthy and the other by former AICC(I) general-secretary G.K. Moopanar. While the Moopanar group wants the party polls rescheduled, the other camp wants no delay. The Moopanar group accuses its rivals of malpractices in enrolling members. Its followers fear the polls will be rigged as they haven't been given enough membership books or application forms.

But the Ramamurthy group argues it has already spent Rs 20 lakh on printing books and membership cards. Thirteen MPs even submitted a memorandum to the prime minister asking for the elections to be held as scheduled. They also said the Moopanar camp had been permitted to submit its membership books to the AICC(I).

With both sides digging in their heels, the decision lies in the hands of Ramamurthy who has just returned to Delhi from the US. But the fate of the elections still hangs in balance.

—AMARNATH K. MENON, ANAND VISWANATHAN and PRAKASH M. SWAMY

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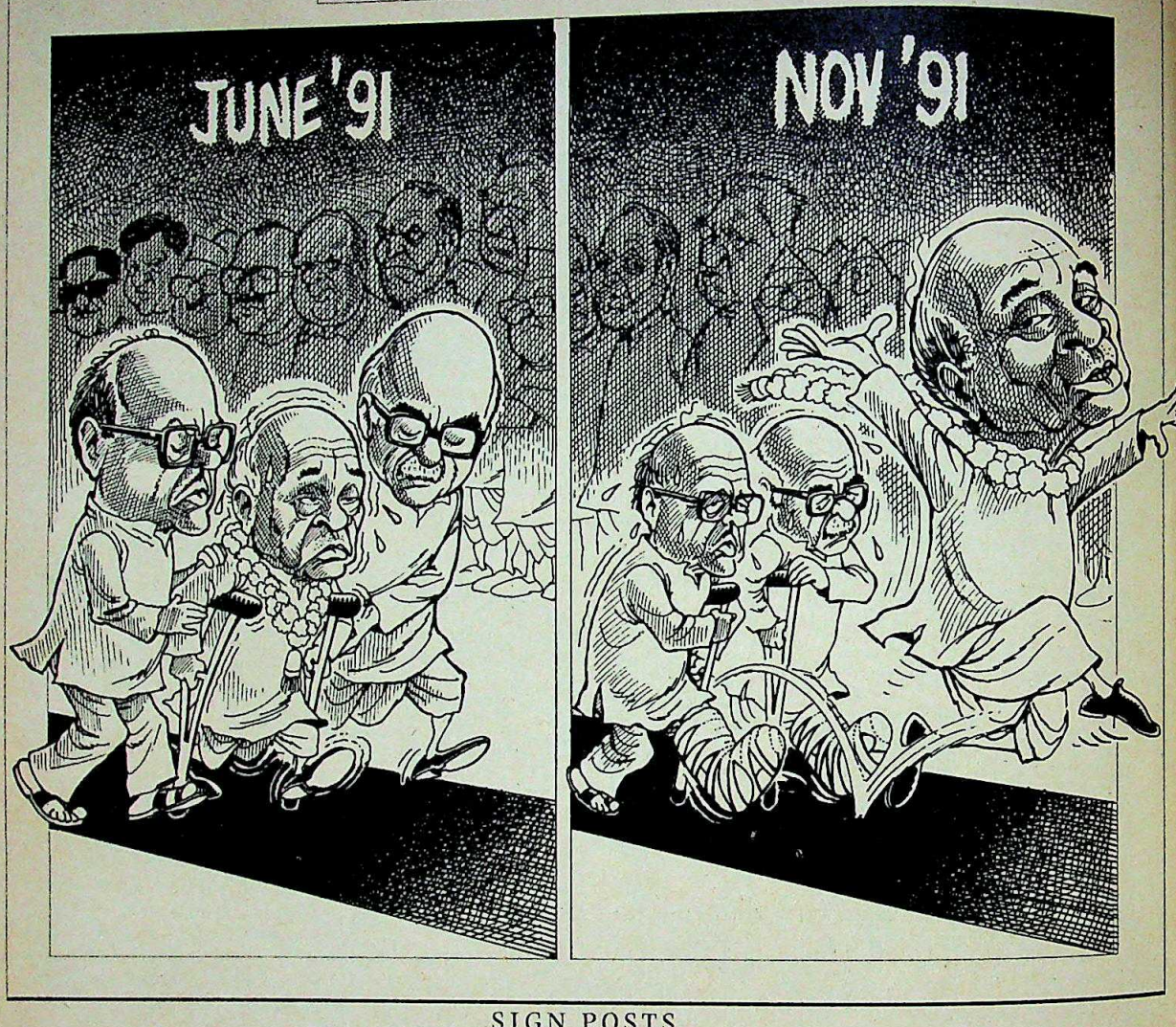
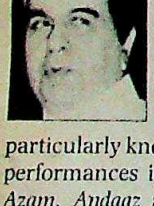


SIGN POSTS

HOSPITALISED: Hindi film actor, **Dilip Kumar**, in Bombay after he complained of "uneasiness" during the shooting of his first directorial venture, *Kalinga*, at R.K. Studios. The thespian—often referred to as the king of tragedy—is particularly known for his memorable performances in films like *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Andaaz* and more recently in *Shakti* and *Saudagar*.



REVIVED: by the Election Commission (EC) after a break of seven months, **proceedings against the BJP** for alleged misuse of its electoral symbol, the lotus, during L.K. Advani's controversial rath yatra in October 1990. The EC issued a notice in New Delhi stating that the petition, filed by Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh among several others, would be heard on January 7, 1992.

REVISED: for foreign nationals, **the entrance fee to the Taj Mahal**. They will now have to pay the equivalent of $10 to view the famed monument that many of them identify India with. The newly-introduced fee will also cover the viewing fee for the Agra Fort. Indian citizens will, however, continue to pay the earlier price of Rs 2 to visit Shah Jehan's architectural marvel.

COMPLETED: 1,000 days in hiding, by **Salman Rushdie**. The India-born author has been underground in Britain ever since the late Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* calling for his death. The storm followed the publication of his controversial novel *The Satanic Verses*, a book also banned in India.

RELEASED: by P.V. Rangayya Naidu, deputy minister for communications, a commemorative **stamp on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**. The stamp was released at a function in New Delhi, on the occasion of the 200th death anniversary of the famed Austrian composer, best known for *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. The stamp is of Rs 6.50 denomination.

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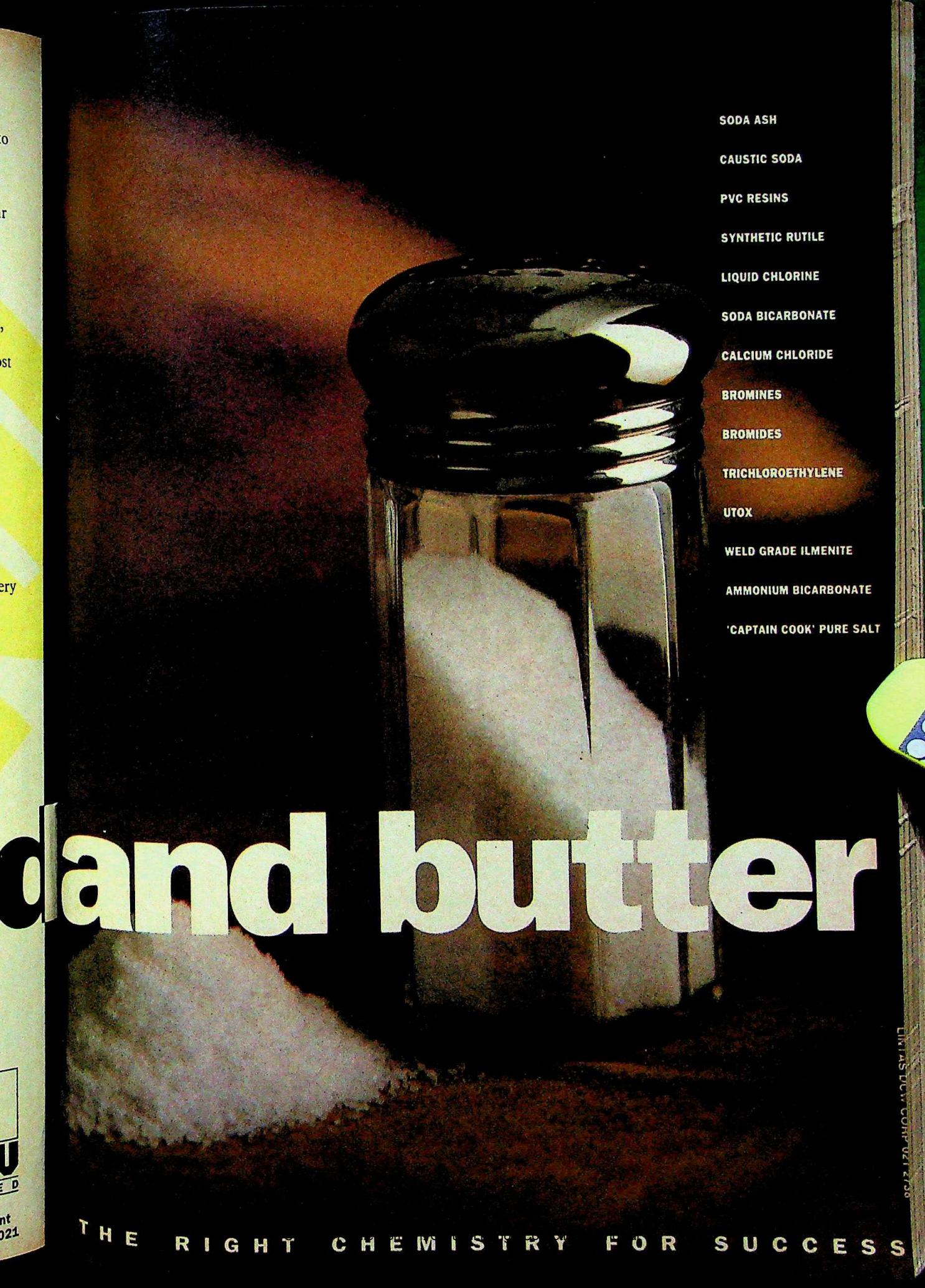
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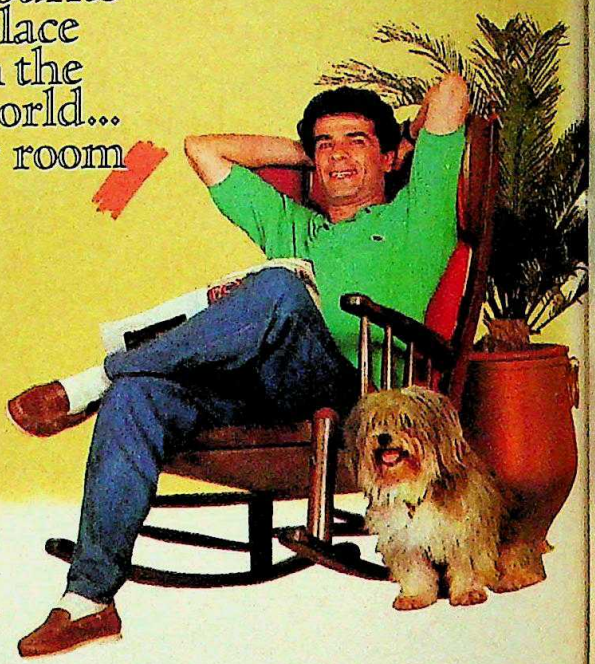

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THE AMRITRAJ BROTHERS

On a Hot Streak

Though they have retired from centre-court, the fabulous Amritraj saga of fame and fortune continues, as they taste success in the entertainment and sports businesses.

By DEEPTI KHAROD AHMAD
in Los Angeles

IT'S a winning streak that refuses to end. For Vijay Amritraj and his brothers, Anand and Ashok, the leap across the oceans from Madras to sun-soaked California came on the wings of tennis success. The tennis aces have retired from centre-court, but their saga of fame and fortune continues unabated. They are now raking in millions in diverse, mainly entertainment-oriented, businesses and are seen in the company of the West Coast glitterati.

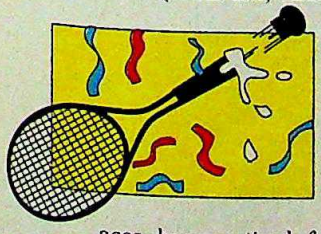
Their enterprise is even more creditable as bigger tennis stars, including Bjorn Borg, have gone into business and come a cropper. The brothers retain their old shyness when it comes to talking about their riches—remember Vijay's row with the All India Lawn Tennis Association over the issue of his earnings? But the latest Amritraj "victory" has been the success of kid brother Ashok's *Double Impact* that netted more than $30 million. Anand guesses that between them, their annual turnover is about $10 million.

And so their Hollywood champagne-and-caviar circuit life-styles seem to suggest. Vijay's massive mansion in Encino on the western outskirts of Los Angeles typifies the affluence of the West Coast rich. With a grand facade, imposing iron gates, a tennis court, a swimming pool, ornate furniture, and an array of crystal and chandeliers, it seems like a White House replica. Decorated by his Sri Lankan wife, Shyamala, his house has a huge sign threatening trespassers with an "armed response".

The first to court fame and fortune in the early '70s was Vijay—the A of the famous ABC, Amritraj, Borg, Connors, of tennis. Although he's quit professional tennis, today at 37, the pace of his life hasn't slowed down. He still plays at exhibition games and pro-celebrity tournaments. Away from the spotlight of international tennis, he now spends his time before

Photographs by IMTIAZ AHMAD

(From left) Anand, Helen, Vijay, Shyamala, Ashok and Chitranjali: a fine family



Having meshed in with the winner-takes-all world of California showbiz, the brothers are on their way to becoming the first Indian family in the state.

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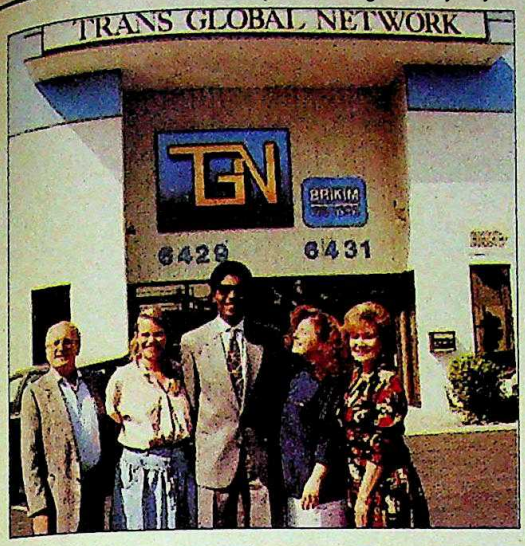

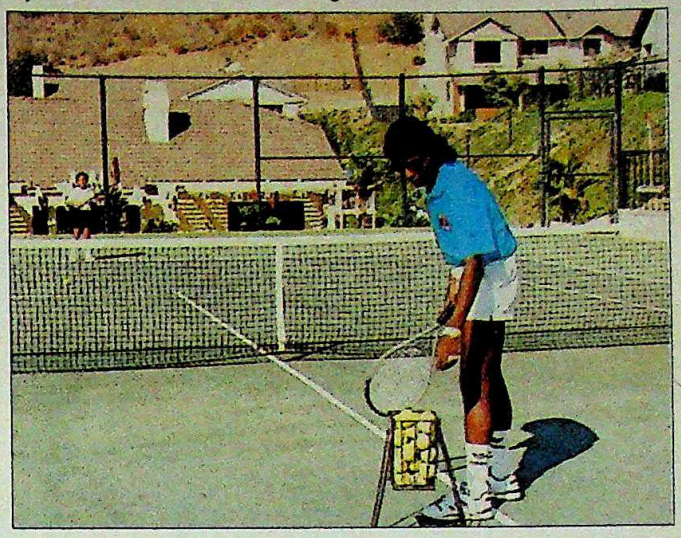

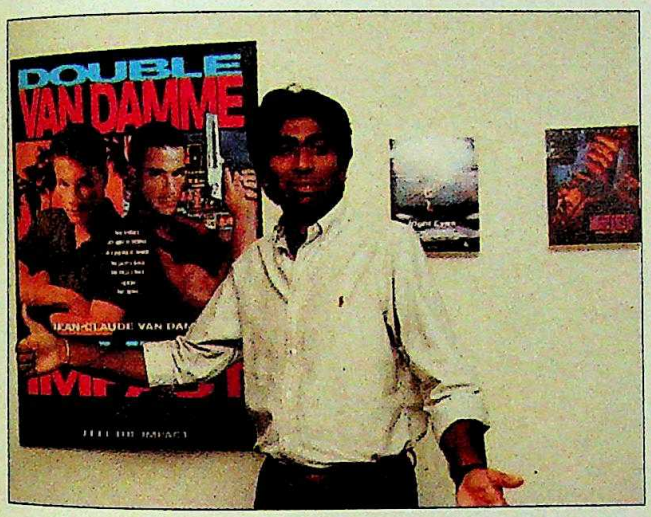

(Clockwise from left) Ashok in his office; Vijay with his staff; and Anand playing with his son

While Anand runs a health club, Vijay and Ashok are in the more glamorous business of news channels and films.

the arc lights—or even behind them.

After his highly-publicised role in the James Bond film, *Octopussy*, Vijay has been up to his neck with work in his multi-million-dollar empire—Amritraj Entertainment. Right now he's concentrating on his three-year-old Trans Global Network, a cable television channel, like CNN, scheduled to go on the air in the US in January 1992. He's already been airing a programme, India Vision, through the cable channel, Asia News and Entertainment Network (ANEN), which he owns with business partner Raj Dutt. This summer he introduced a video magazine.

Dutt says ANEN—which he describes as "no mom and pop operation"—wasn't "financed with venture capitalists. We financed it ourselves". Which means they put in $2 million to $3 million seed money themselves.

Not that sports has been put on the backburner. Among Vijay's other commitments: board meetings for Britannia and Puma-Corona; work as the president of the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP); and the family-operated tennis camp in Madras.

With his hands full, Vijay has no regrets about leaving tennis, except one—not winning Wimbledon. But even about that he's his sporting self. Wrote he in his autobiography: "I think it was the end of a phase in my life. I'll always miss it but tennis gave me everything I never dreamed of."

THAT includes rubbing shoulders with the likes of Rajiv Gandhi, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, George Shultz and James Baker. In fact, the walls of his office, merely 15 minutes from his house, are crowded with photographs of Vijay with such celebrities. Coincidentally, all the American politicians are noted Republicans. But Vijay insists he's not involved in politics—either in the US or in India.

Yet in many ways, Vijay is India's unofficial ambassador to the US. For instance, when the Reagan administration was talking about selling four AWACS to Pakistan, Vijay actively lobbied against it. "It was disadvantageous to India. Moreover, it created an arms race in our part of the world which is totally unnecessary." Now Vijay and Anand are often seen judging the Miss India-LA kind of contests.

Despite his globe-trotting life-style, the family is always topmost on Vijay's priority list. Sundays are reserved for mass with Shyamala and sons, Vikram and Prakash, followed by breakfast at McDonald's. But says Vijay: "For me, numbers one, two and three have always been Indian food."

Brother Anand, 39, who is also his doubles partner, couldn't agree more. That's when he's taking a breather from his hectic work on the tennis court. Anand still plays doubles with the ATP, pro-celebrity events and Grand Champion matches. He recently played in Bahrain with Vijay, and regularly goes to Madras to check up on the tennis camp, the Britannia Amritraj Training Programme (BAT). Administered by mother Maggie Amrithraj and funded by Britannia—

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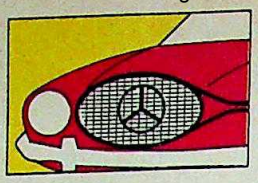


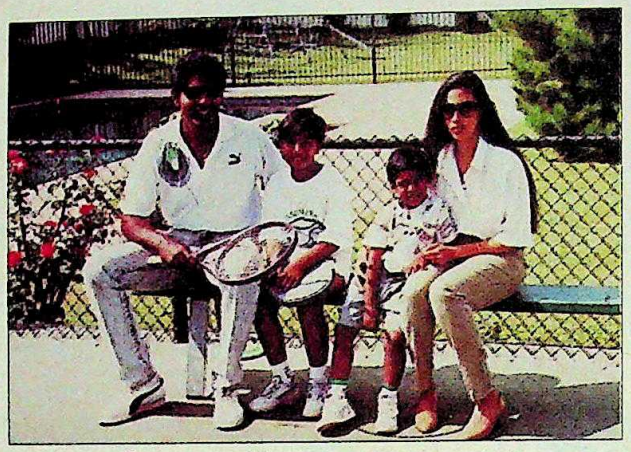
The three brothers lead a high-profile, jet-set life-style and are part of the ritzy champagne-and-caviar Hollywood circuit.

they provide Rs 3 lakh every month—the camp trains eight students for the Davis Cup. Says Anand: "I'd like to be completely in the tennis-related business."

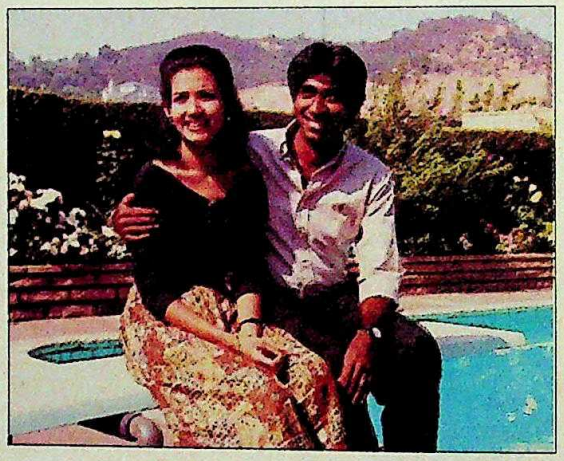
ASIDE from tennis and chess—which he also plays—Anand runs the six-year-old Amritraj Racquet and Health Spa in New York. Spread over two acres, the health club has about 3,000 members and is a real money spinner, grossing about $1.5 million a year. It includes four indoor tennis courts, 10 racquetball courts, a jacuzzi, a restaurant and a bar. The city of Calabassas in California has asked him to renovate an old health club on the lines of his own spa.

But Anand's life is in sharp contrast to Vijay's jet-set pace. As he says: "When I'm home, I'm home 24 hours a day." Cooking pasta and tandoori chicken with his Italian-American wife, Helen. Or helping son Stephen, 7, microwave a hamburger. Stephen, incidentally, is also showing keen interest in tennis.

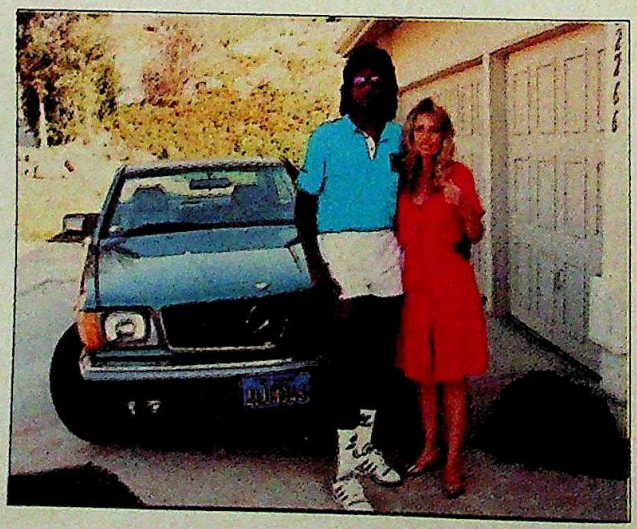
The family is just as important for Ashok, 34—the youngest of the brothers. But Ashok, least known on the tennis circuit, probably leads the most glamorous life-style of the three. Throughout the '70s he played professional tennis including Wimbledon and the Davis Cup. He then used the Amritraj celebrity status as a stepping stone to the glamour world of the movies. Today he lives in the exclusive Bel Air neighbourhood in a plush house with a swimming pool. And a living room



Vijay's family at their private tennis centre



Ashok and Chitranjali at their swimming pool



Anand and Helen outside their opulent mansion

boasting of a fabled Picasso and a quirky Dali. Says he: "Hollywood is a state of mind. People come here with great dreams. Maybe 1 per cent make it."

He's certainly among the few who've made it. The success of Ashok's latest release, *Double Impact*—which cost a whopping $20 million—establishes him, the president of Amritraj Entertainment, as a serious player in the business. A member of the Motion Picture Academy in Hollywood, Ashok's movies range from horror films like *Popcorn* to "erotic thrillers" like *Last Call* and *Legal Tender*. The budget for *Popcorn* was about $8 million. Says Ashok, who's working on two more films, *Criminal Intent* and *Wild Date*: "Our production budget for 1992 will be bigger than 1991." Though not a movie moghul, Ashok is described as the first Indian entrepreneur in the cutthroat world of Hollywood.

Among the brothers' celebrity friends: actors Sidney Poitier, Charlton Heston, Van Damme (who had the lead role in *Double Impact*), singer Elton John and the famous sports announcer, Bernie Kopel. At an October pro-celebrity event for Ronald and Nancy Reagan, Ashok and his partner walked away with the first prize.

The remarkable thing about the Amritrajs is the way they've meshed in the winner-takes-all world of California show-biz but retained their Indian identity. If they were once India's sporting ambassadors, they're now on their way to becoming the first Indian family in California. ■

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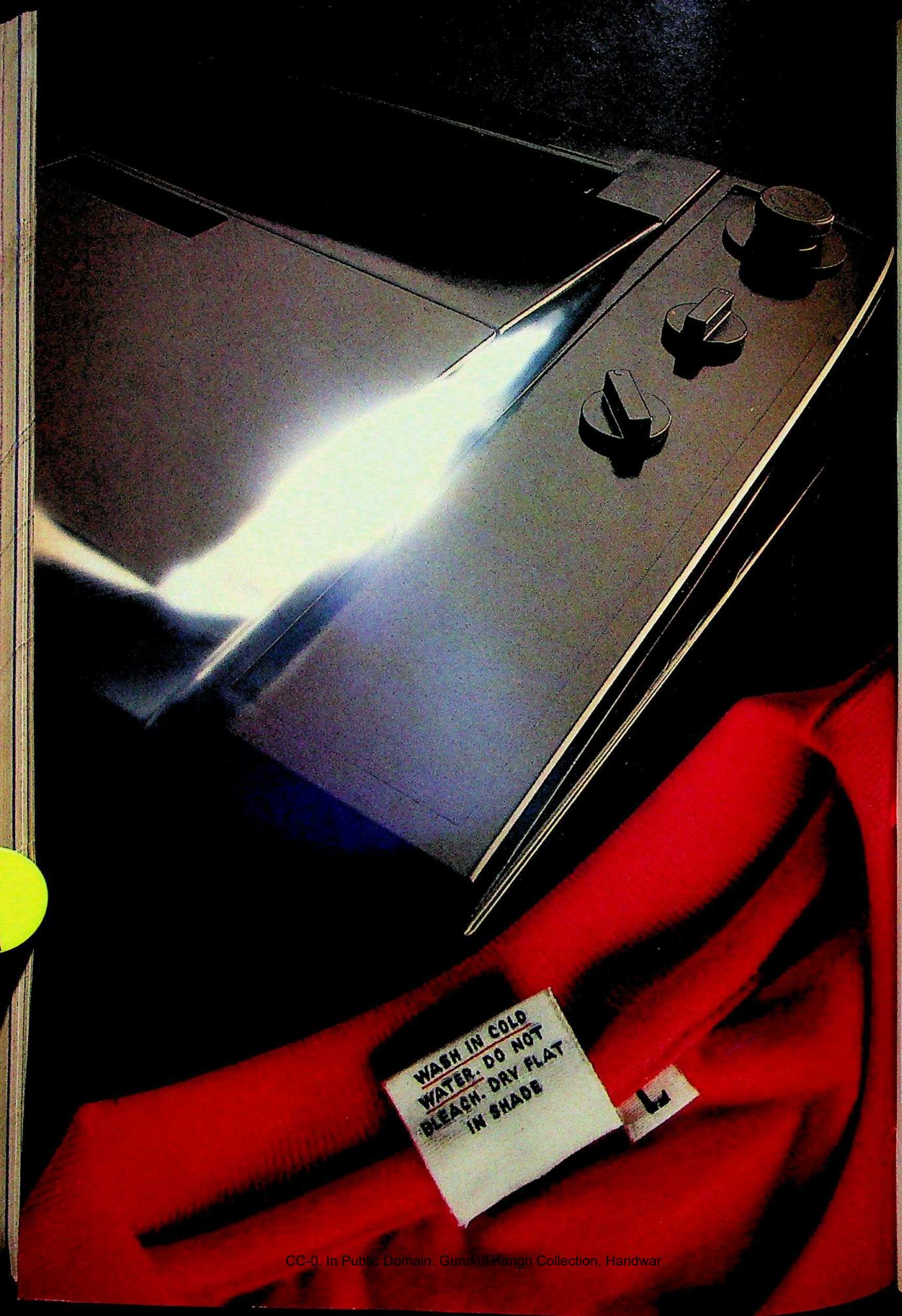

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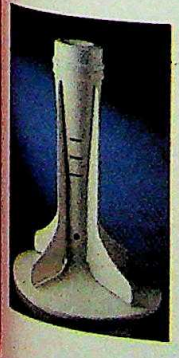

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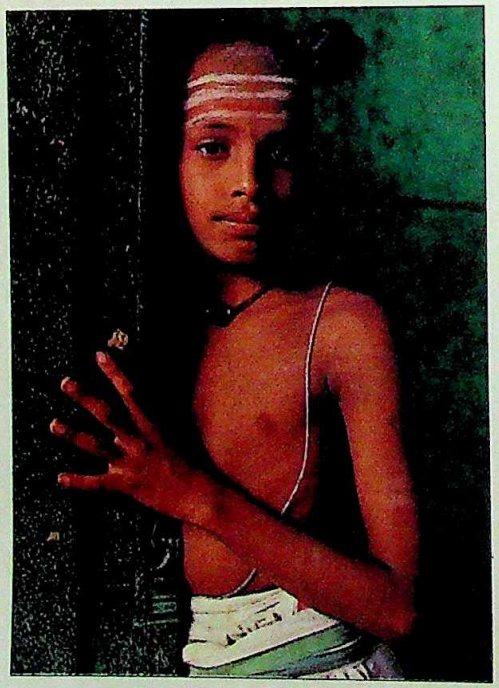
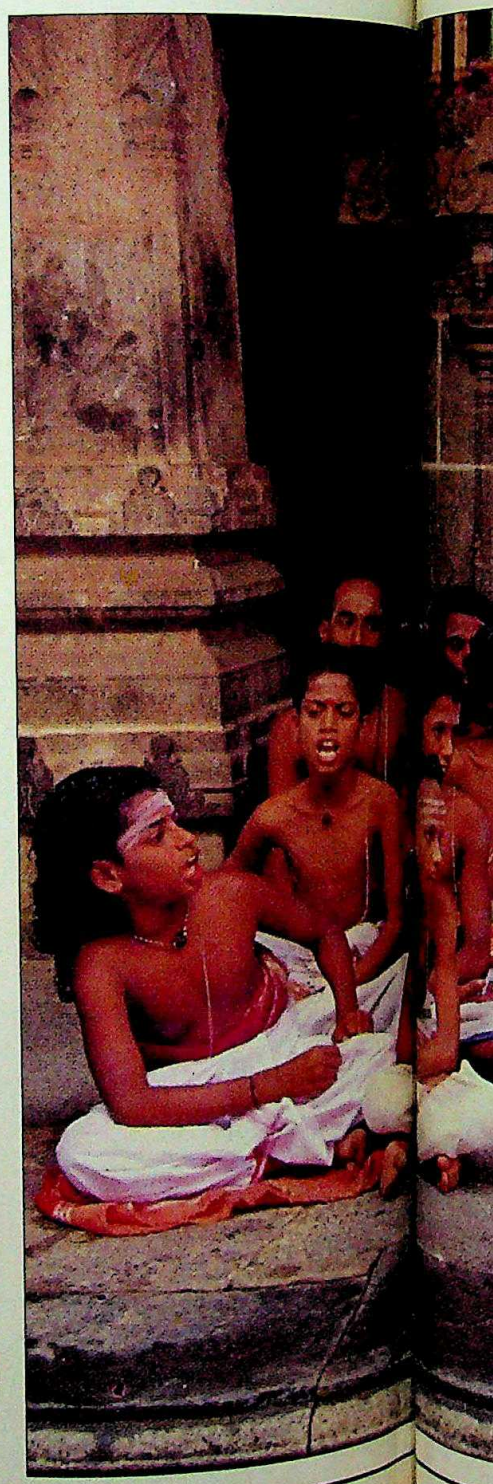
DIKSHITARS

A VANISHING PRIESTHOOD

Faced by economic and social pressures, the Dikshitars in Tamil Nadu are on the verge of extinction, report Correspondent KAVITHA SHETTY and Photographer SHYAM TEKWANI.





IN a sunlit corridor of the ancient Nataraja temple in the temple town of Chidambaram in Tamil Nadu, a group of young boys sit cross-legged, their foreheads smeared with holy ash and their long locks neatly knotted into *kudumis* (tuft of hair). Their eyes rest with reverence on the *vadhyar* or teacher who is seated in front of them as they chant Vedic *shlokas*. Between five and 12 years old, these boys have a divine destiny: to serve as custodians of the temple.

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From the earliest age, the Dikshitar boy-child's priorities are clearly spelt out: religious training, prayers and pujas come first; other things like school, friends, fun and games a distant second.

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They belong to the Dikshitar community believed to have been brought to Chidambaram by Lord Nataraja (Shiva) 3,000 years ago from Mount Kailash. This community has since had the sole right to administer the temple and perform rituals. Once renowned for its mastery over the Vedas, today this dwindling community, barely 800 in number, struggles for survival.

The Nataraja temple is run by an elected 20-member committee which meets every 20 days. Every married male member of the community—there are 250 now—is a trustee of the temple and has the right to perform pujas there. A share of his earnings is remitted to the temple for its maintenance and upkeep.

THE traditions of the Dikshitars are ancient and often get them into trouble. For example, they tend to become the targets of social ridicule when they organise mass child marriage functions. In 1988 when 20 child couples were married, the Dravida Kazhagam filed a case objecting to this practice and demanded that it be stopped. The Dikshitars have managed to secure a

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high court stay, and are insistent that their traditions not be tampered with. Says Tandava Dikshitar, 21, who married Sham Sundari, 15, six years ago: "These are our traditions. I see absolutely nothing wrong in them."

Their traditions are inextricably bound with the temple. As soon as he has learnt to speak, the Dikshitar child begins to imbibe the highly religious atmosphere around him, the regular prayers at home, the pujas, the temple and its festivities. School, play and friends come only next in priority. Ms Sundar, 23, declares: "Lord Nataraja always comes first." At the age of seven, the Dikshitar boy has his sacred thread ceremony after which he begins to attend the Vedic classes. After a few years of this he is ready for marriage. However, the married couple is allowed to live together only after the girl has attained puberty.

For centuries the Dikshitar has lived in a sequestered universe. But now increasingly, the upheavals in the material world outside have started making an impact on his life. The earnings from the temple on which he has always subsisted are no longer enough. Moreover, the increased

Though closely knit by tradition, many Dikshitars have been forced by economic hardship to seek alternative vocations.

(Clockwise from left) A young boy poses with his hair loose; a family portrait; and a carpentry class

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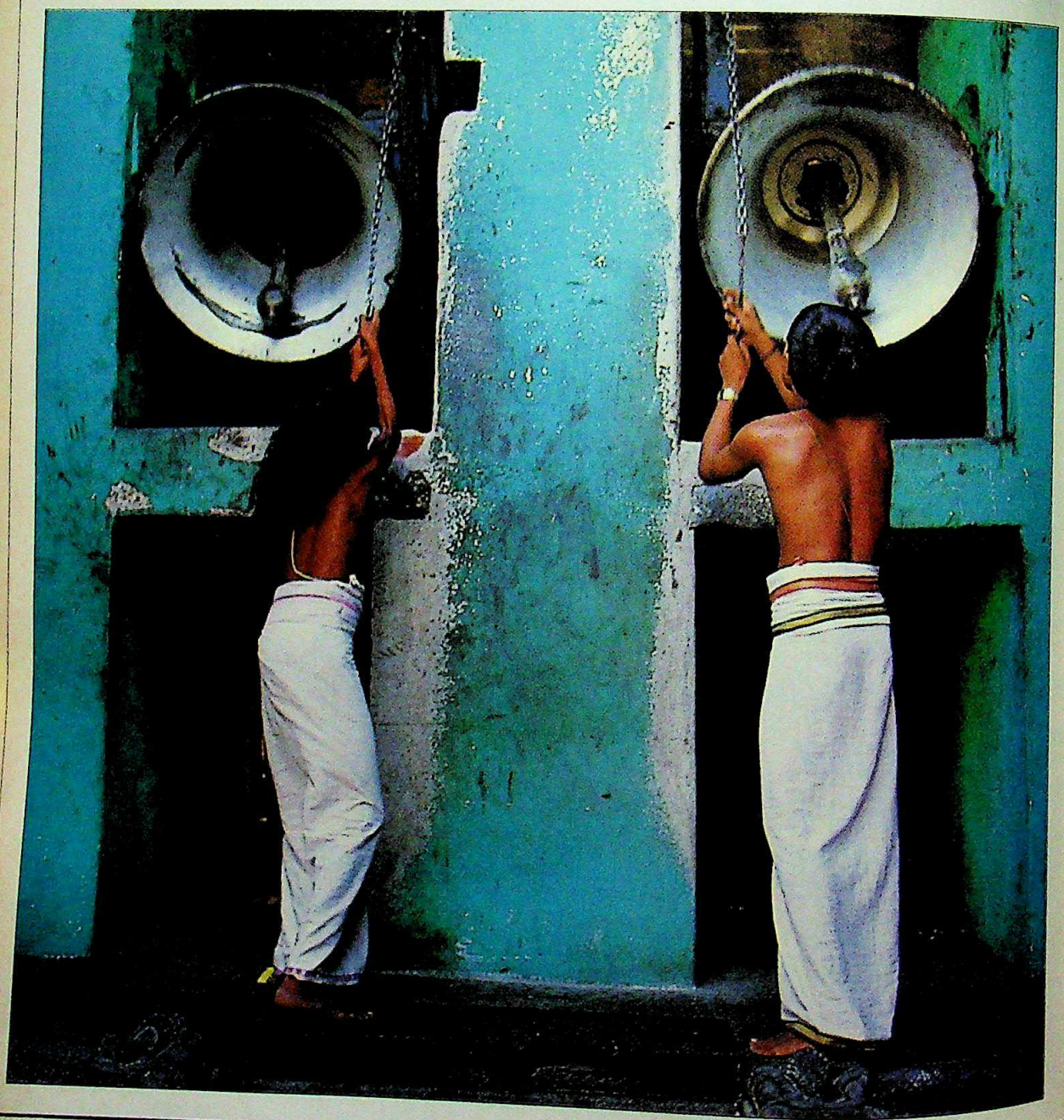
cost of living is fast rendering the Dikshitar tradition economically unviable.

Inevitably this has pushed some to seek alternative vocations. Says Ganesamurthy, 35, who went to Madras for a course in woodcraft which he now teaches at the local school: "At the temple the income is inconsistent and never goes beyond Rs 500 a month, while at the school, I'm earning Rs 1,000." A similar assertion is made by Bala Ganesa Dikshitar, 42, who obtained a bank loan and subsequently set up a cycle hire and repair shop. Says he: "If we were to depend on the temple earnings alone, we would starve."

BUT there are also those who've come full circle. Ganapathy Subramaniam, 23, from working part-time in a mechanic shop, joined the ONGC as a driver at Karaikal near Pondicherry, cutting off his hair to go there and work. But three months later he returned to Chidamba-

No sooner is he seven years old than the boy priest has his thread ceremony after which begins his religious training in right earnest.

Dikshitar boys ringing the massive temple bells during the main puja



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Thereafter, the acolyte's life is governed by daily pujas, the temple's festivities, and lessons in Vedic shlokas and rituals.

A young boy lights the temple lamps on Kirthigai, a follow up to Diwali

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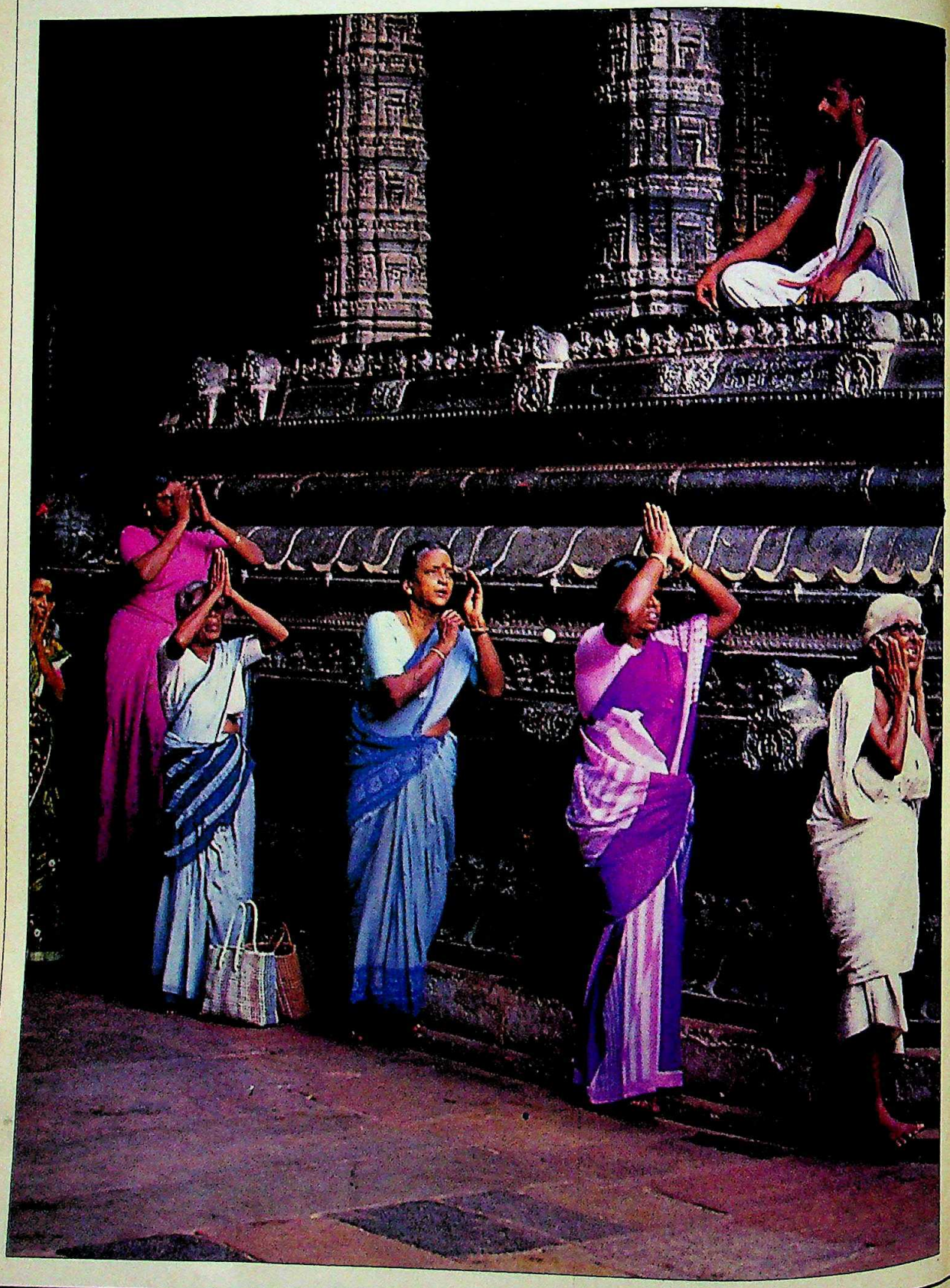
Like relics of an ancient civilisation the Dikshitars amble on, diminishing in their purpose, dwindling in their numbers.



A priest immersed in meditation while worshippers file past

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ram, and once again resumed shuttling between the temple and the mechanic's workshop. Now he admits: "I cannot live so far away from the temple. This is my destiny."

Nor do the Dikshitars face extinction through economic hardship alone. There is also the fact of their diminishing numbers. The Dikshitars have been praying for an increase in their numbers but the gods haven't been listening. No one is able to explain the dwindling population. "It may be because we have been inter-marrying for centuries," says an elderly Dikshitar.

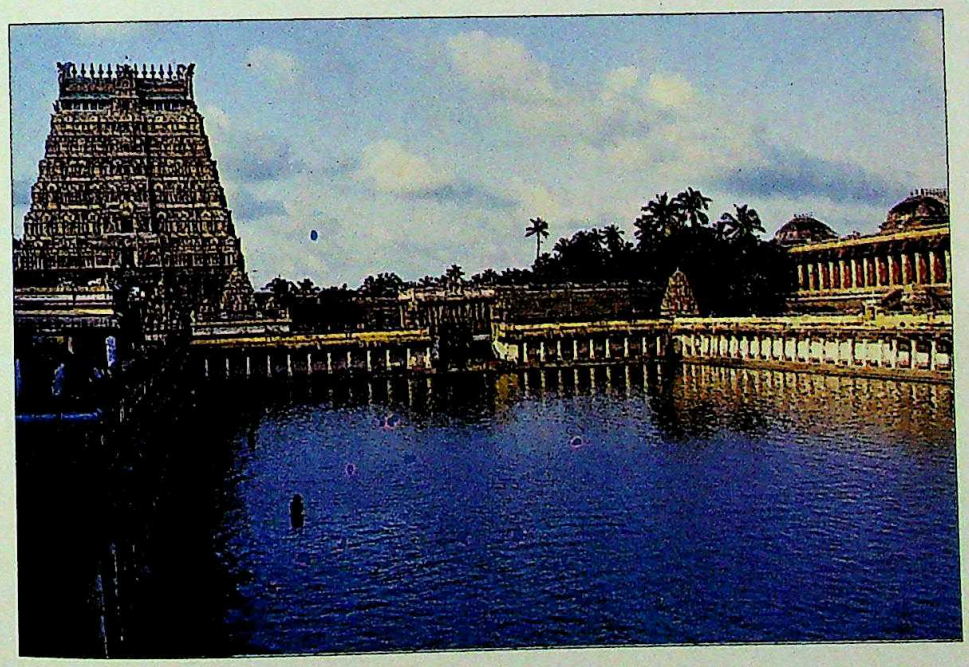
He may be right. There are some 200 Dikshitar families living around the temple. These are divided into four sub-sects among whom marriages are arranged. This endogamous system, while it has kept the community together, has contributed largely to its insulation. Says Natarajarathina Dikshitar, an Indologist and the first member of the community to travel abroad: "Those who lead pure lives and attain moksha are not reborn. Maybe that is what is happening to the Dikshitars." Does that mean the community will become extinct within a century? "Perhaps. Only Nataraja knows," says he.

Their women have for long been straitjacketed in traditional roles. Wrapped in a nine-yard sari from the day she attains puberty, the Dikshitar woman spends most of her life in the kitchen or in the puja room. Asks Rajalakshmi, an elderly widow sporting a saffron sari and a shaven head: "What else is there for a woman to do?" This quiet acceptance extends to the present generation too. Her granddaughter-in-law, Danyalaxmi, now 20 and married when she was 14, is the mother of a two-year-old child. Her husband, Kanakasabesan, 23, looks after a small grocery store to supplement his temple earnings.

There have been attempts over the years to jolt the Dikshitars out of their complacence. The AIADMK under MGR and the earlier DMK regime tried unsuccessfully to take over the temple from them. The community, as a result, is still rather wary of accepting any governmental grants for fear that it might interfere in the temple's management. Says Natarajarathina: "We prefer to continue giving a share of our earnings for the upkeep of the temple rather than accept any favours from the Government."

And so they carry on, ambling through life like relics of an ancient civilisation abandoned by some quirky time machine. Echoing the dilemma of the community, Natarajarathina says: "Today we are like the mythical creature in Hindu legend, half bird-half fish. If the fish swims in water, the bird will die. If the bird flies in the air, the fish will die. We cannot give up our traditions, yet how long can we ignore change?" ■

The Dikshitars eschew government grants for fear it may interfere in the temple's management.



The priests take a dip in the Nataraja temple tank before prayers

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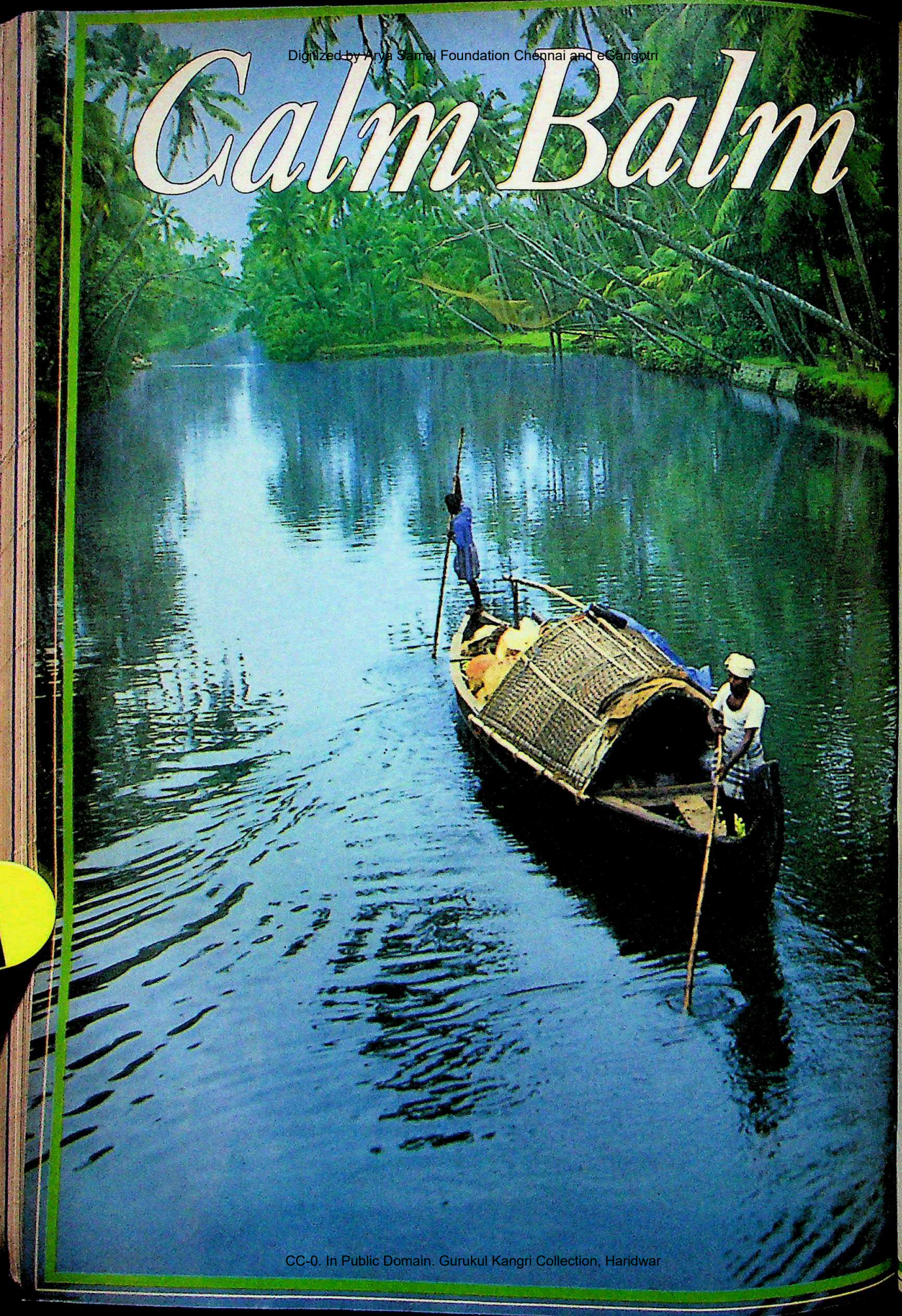

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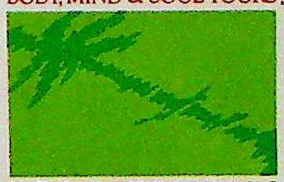

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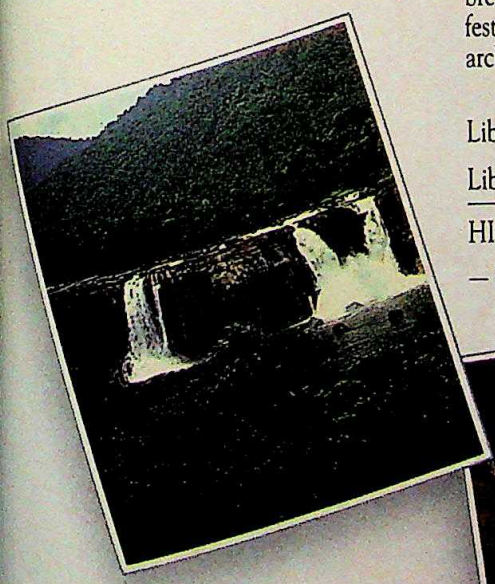

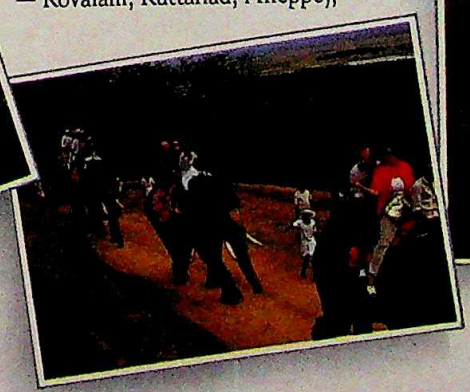

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VIDEO INDUSTRY

Finding a New Niche

To score in an increasingly competitive market, more and more producers are turning to specialty films and narrow segments.

By W.P.S. SIDHU

ARE you a trivia-hungry kid, tired of the *Tell Me Why* variety of encyclopaedias? Not to worry. You could buy or rent an animated lesson on how things work from your friendly neighbourhood video library. Maybe you're a wannabe yuppie who wants a faster ride to the top of the managerial ladder? Buy the self-help video film which tells you how to go about it.

It could be that you are a banker. Try wooing NRI investors with videos discussing the new economic policy. Or a company that wants to charm prospective buyers and inform employees about what's happening in its divisions? Put it all on videotape.

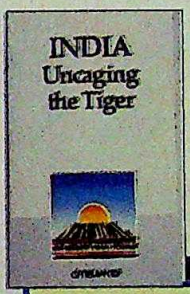
Welcome to the new era of utilitarian video communication in India, which goes beyond watching movies, newsmagazines and replays of weddings. This has happened for two reasons. Thanks mostly to inroads by cable and satellite TV, sales of the staple Hindi movies have declined—video prints of 'A' grade Hindi movies are down to an average of 14,000 copies, a 50-per cent drop in just two years. This has pushed producers such as Shemaroo Video, a big name in the Hindi potboiler market, Prime Time Video Communication and Red Cat Video Organisation, to think of non-Hindi film-based videos, as part of a long-term diversification process.

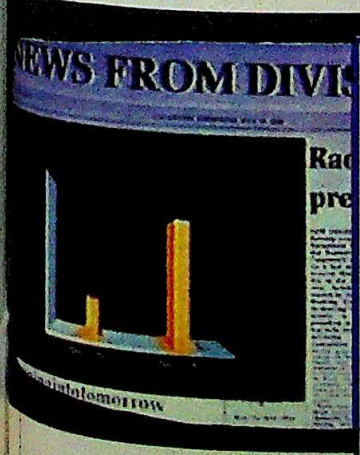
But even those who were not dependent on the Hindi movie circuit have moved into specialty videos. Previously confined to making only advertisement films, they are now producing slick, high-tech videos which are turning a lot of heads in the corporate sector. "The video industry is shifting from broad-casting to narrow-casting," says Amit Khanna, producer of video magazines, *Business Plus* and *People Plus*. "Niche marketing is the latest strategy." Today, there are 200 video firms country-wide, raking in an estimated Rs 25 crore a year from specialty tapes, up from practically nothing a couple of years ago. Larger video firms make over Rs 1 crore a year.

The most successful of these niches is the corporate video which accounts for about 80 per cent of the market. And here, the medium is used every which way. When ANZ Grindlays Bank wanted to attract bright, young management graduates to its fold, it didn't just talk about it. Instead, it prepared a slick, 10-minute video film and screened it as part of its recruitment drive at the Indian Institute of Management campuses. When Citibank N.A.'s foreign exchange division wanted to give its top account holders an update on the domestic and international economy, it chose to launch *Citiscan*, a video newsletter. "Videos are replacing brochures and slide shows," says Ronnie Screwvala, director of United Television (UTV), a division of United Software Communications. "They lead to more effective communication."

Mukand Limited uses a corporate video when it scouts for foreign collaborators, the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust—which manages the Nhava Sheva port near Bombay—uses it to draw custom to its berths and even the Navy prefers a video show, called

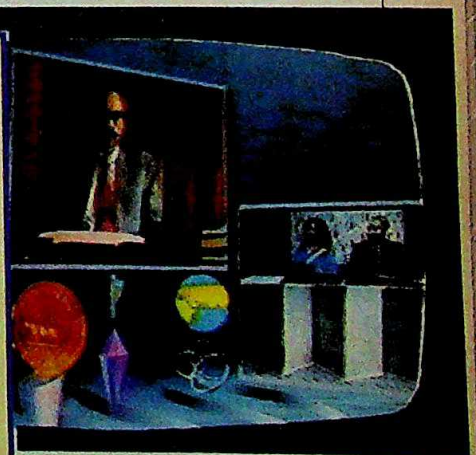
Today, there are 200 video firms country-wide, raking in an estimated Rs 25 crore a year from specialty tapes.





Companies such as ITC Limited are replacing drab in-house journals with lively video magazines which detail developments in the company and carry interviews with top-ranking executives.

Citibank woos NRI investors with a video discussing the new economic policy, while its foreign exchange unit gives account-holders an update on economic trends through a video newsletter.



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Total readership	:	21,44,000
Readers with a household income of over Rs.4000/- per month:		
Total	:	3,47,000
Women	:	1,16,000
Readers in topmost socio-economic strata:		
Total	:	7,63,000
Women	:	2,21,000

So, the next time you want a quality response, reach for The Hindu. The daily that gives you quality readership. More than any other daily in South India.

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THE HINDU

REACHES MORE PEOPLE WITH MORE BUYING POWER

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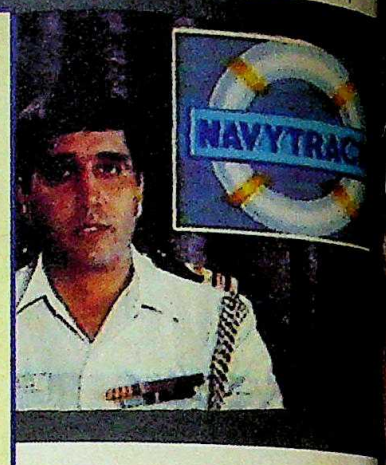
How-to-do-it videos on pre- and post-natal lessons for expectant mothers, like *Baby Care*, as well as on ikebana, hair care and the use of cosmetics, are entering the consumer market.

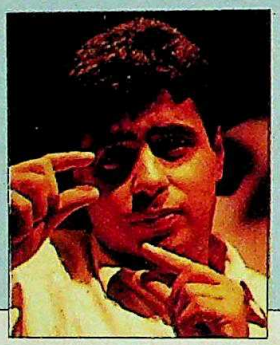
The Indian Navy uses a quarterly video magazine, *Navytrack*, to keep officers and men in touch with latest developments in the service, including those relating to policy, pay and promotions.



Navytrack. Says Vice-Admiral S. Govil, vice chief of naval staff: "It's an effective way to keep the officers in touch with developments in the service—including those relating to promotions."

A range of companies from Glaxo India Limited, Voltas Limited, Air India and ITC Limited, are replacing drab in-house journals with video magazines. "A video is a pleasant change," says Adite Syam, who heads ITC's public relations cell. "It's the next best thing to the chairman visiting a city to meet employees." It isn't clear if video presentations have brought concrete results though. People such as Pradeep Chopra, a Calcutta builder, claim to have sold Rs 20 crore worth of commercial and residential property, thanks to video presentations.

And if results are of the sort Chopra boasts, it is more than worth the price. A video can cost upto Rs 10 lakh to make, depending on length, content—say, the amount of travelling required for location-specific shots—and high-tech gimmickry. Pradeep Kumar, media group head of Trikaya Grey Advertising, argues that even though these specialised films reach only a limited number, they happen to be the target audience.



"Videos are replacing brochures and lead to better communication."
RONNIE SCREWVALA
Director, UTV

CORPORATE videos may be the hottest number but other niches, where videos are made to be sold as a product rather than a marketing or information catalyst, are nothing to sniff at. The growth in domestic VCR production—up from 14,000 pieces in 1986 to about 1.5 lakh last year—has helped create a market. Plus the fact that a larger number is smuggled in or imported—according to Khanna, 1.5 million households have VCRs. More than half are estimated to be in large cities and towns.

By far the biggest potential market in this area, say industry folk, are children. Specialty tapes may sell a few hundred or thousand copies, but kiddie-oriented stuff is the real gold mine. "Close to half the video-owning houses have kids," says Ratnakar Rai, director, Prime Time Video. "So there's a substantial potential here." This segment could soak up educational videos, movies and cartoons at Rs 135-plus each, and send the current figures of Rs 50 lakh worth of sales a year to anything up to five or six times that figure.

A selection of videos available

"Nearly 20 per cent of our customers are children," says B.H. Maroo, a director of Shemaroo, which has sales of Rs 1 crore a year. Maroo's company has bought rights to sell in India international favourites such as *Dennis the Menace* and animated classics—*Treasure Island* and *Oliver Twist*, among others. Sales, he feels, could touch 30,000 tapes, five times the present level. Red Cat Video has opted for a more Indian appeal and bought rights of films from the Children's Film Society of India and is relying on selling to schools. Red Cat Executive Director S. Agarwal says his network has three lakh students who pay Rs 10 each a year to view these films. And Shemaroo has just launched a video encyclopaedia series entitled *How Things Work*.

The most nebulous niche is the self-help video. Although there is a proliferation of these—ranging from baby care and ikebana to hair styling and use of cosmetics—marketing remains a problem. It was to circumvent this problem that Jayesh Choksi of Akik Chitra, producers of the 30-part *Self Improvement Series*, established a 30-strong marketing team to sell his cassettes to small business establishments. Rai says that no other segment, apart from children's videos, is large enough to be termed a segment. But producers are optimistic. This hope is the biggest boost the market has going for it. And it underscores one point: things can only look up. ■

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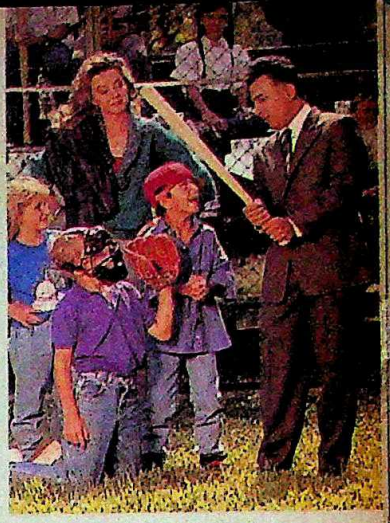

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(IT/91/7)

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The picture you see is of Vikrant's new radial plant in Mysore. This is where it makes all steel radial tyres for trucks and buses.

The plant represents a technological first. Vikrant is the only company in India with the expertise to make all steel radial tyres for heavy commercial vehicles.

This technology, created specifically for India, with the help of Avon, places Vikrant firmly at the forefront of India's tyre industry.

A National Asset

If all trucks and buses in India were to use radials, the potential saving to the country would be well over Rs. 1000 crores a year on diesel alone.

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Among users in India, Vikrant's all steel radials have gained instant acceptance. 45,000 are in use, under the most exacting service conditions, bearing testimony to Vikrant's superior technology.

Export Potential

Vikrant all steel radials have already won international recognition. Plans are afoot to step up exports in a big way, by continually upgrading technology and widening the radial range.

This is of special significance since Indian users will have access to world class radials.

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For the shareholder and the plant translates into

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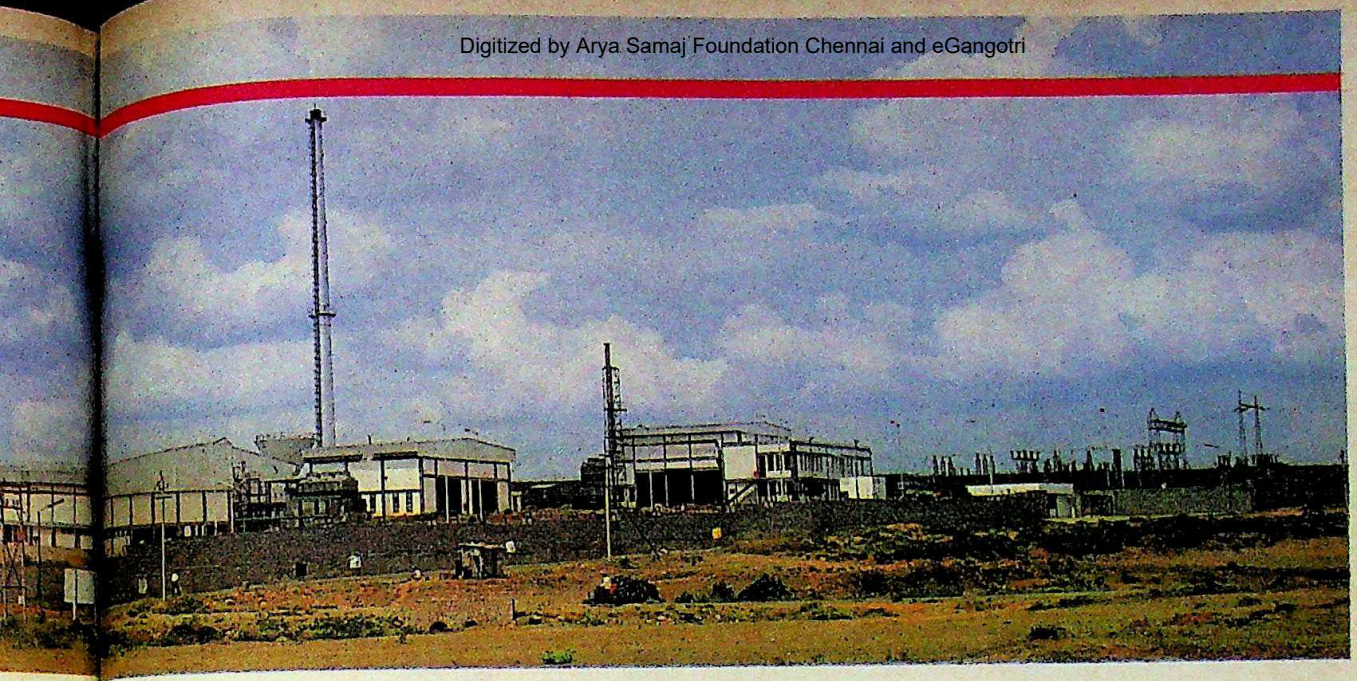

Facts and Figures

The radial plant has come up at a cost of Rs. 48 crores. The annual capacity of the plant is 200,000 tyres, worth Rs. 150 crores in the Indian market. Production commenced in August 1991.

Last year, Vikrant recorded sales worth Rs. 246.32 crores made up mainly of cross-ply tyres. In the coming years, radials will add substantially to the company's turnover.

In the last three years, net profits have increased from Rs. 2.73 crores to Rs. 7.33 crores. Likewise, the company's turnover has risen from Rs. 2.10 to Rs. 6.98. Dividends, from 12.5% to 17.5%.

In the same period, the company's reserves have gone up more than three times, from Rs. 3.18 crores to Rs. 10.02 crores.

Now that the radial plant is operational, further news from Vikrant will benefit both the country and the shareholder.

Results of Technology

VIKRANT

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WAIT A WHILE TO CHEER

THE first signs of easing off have come. Last fortnight, RBI Governor R. Venkitaramanan announced the reduction of cash margins for imports under the Open General Licence—other than capital goods—by a third to 50 per cent. Finance Ministry officials say the foreign exchange situation is now comfortable enough—it's at Rs 8,000 crore (about $3 billion)—to allow for marginal cut-backs. However, this doesn't mean import restrictions will disappear soon. The finance minister is playing it very cautiously, and a relaxation of curbs may only come through next year—if at all. The export front still looks bleak, as does the foreign investment scenario, and until these pick up, curbs stay. IMF and World Bank loans notwithstanding.

GOING PLASTIC

TEXTILE magnate M.K. Modi has diversification plans for Modipon Limited. The Rs 175-crore company—presently producing nylon and polyester filament yarn—will soon produce bisphenol, a resin, an input in the manufacture of plastic products and polycarbonates, used mainly for making car parts. Billed as an import substitution project, it will be located at Cochin with a production capacity of 20,000 tonnes a year. To cost about Rs 140 crore, it is scheduled to go on stream in three years. A part will cater to the country's demands—slated to go up to 10,000 tonnes a year by 1995—and the rest exported. Current status of project: the company has received a Letter of Intent but has yet to make an application for finance, and is scouting around for Japanese collaborators.

MORE FOR CONSUMERISM

ONE more company is getting into the home appliances field—SRF Limited, earlier known as Shri Ram Fibres. The company, which currently manufactures tyre cord, chemicals and auto electricals will soon set up a new outfit, SRF Appliances Ltd. According to President A.K. Sen, the new company will manufacture a wide range of white goods, from electric irons and mixies to washing-machines and dishwashers. Refrigerators are also on the list. "Since we are a heavy engineering company," explains Sen, "we would like to make our own products instead of vending shoddy ones like many companies which are only into trading." According to industry sources, SRF Appliances is already roping in some of Philips India's former appliance suppliers.

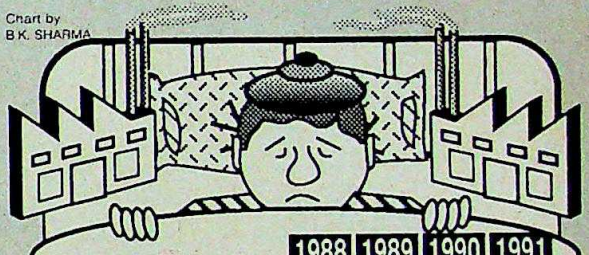
CARBIDE CAPERS

OTHERS besides the Government of India may be after Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL). A consortium of three Calcutta-based businessmen—Shankarlal Saraf, Radhey Shyam Tulsiyan and Kedarnath Fatehpuria of Martin Burn Limited—purchased 13,28,847 UCIL shares between October 1990 and July this year. The company management is nervous about the move—the shares represent a little over 4 per cent of UCIL equity—and have refused to register the share transfer, complaining to the Company Law Board that the three businessmen were "merely acting as a front for more powerful corporate predators". UCIL has now asked the board to investigate the funds for the share purchases, under sections 247 and 250 of the Companies Act.

ALL WOUND UP

IN the context of the clamour for the exit policy for industry, a few facts have gone unnoticed. Mainly, that a large number of industrialists do not wish to close their factories, but prefer them to remain sick. One reason seems to be that once a company is declared sick, creditors cannot ask for their dues. In the past few years, 40 per cent of the

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



	1988	1989	1990	1991
Total number of appeals to BIFR	31	50	95	46
Appeals against winding-up recommendations	6	20	44	27
Appeals dismissed	2	13	24	8
Appeals accepted	2	-	2	2
Appeals pending	-	4	18	17

Source: Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction

appeals made against the orders of the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction were against the winding-up recommendations. Nearly half these petitions have been dismissed, while about 40 per cent are still pending.

KINETIC TECH

ARUN Firodia, the man who has been credited with pepping up the two-wheeler industry with Kinetic Honda scooters, is now eyeing the consumer electronics market as part of his diversification plans. His Pune-based company, Kinetic Motors, is launching a hi-tech colour TV, which among other features, has an in-built computer with 240 kilobytes of memory. The company is quiet on the price-tag. And critics say it could be a tricky launch at a time when the TV industry is in the middle of a downturn in business.

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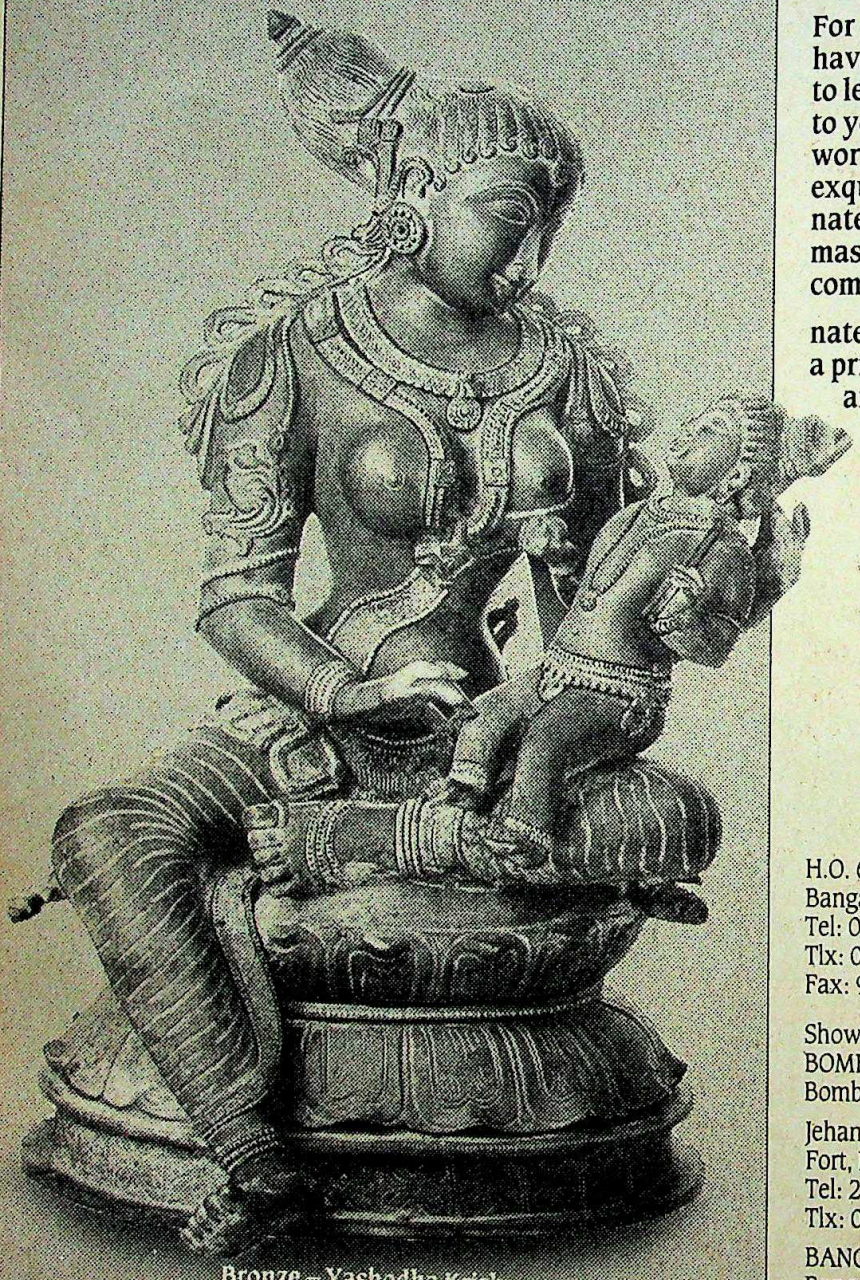

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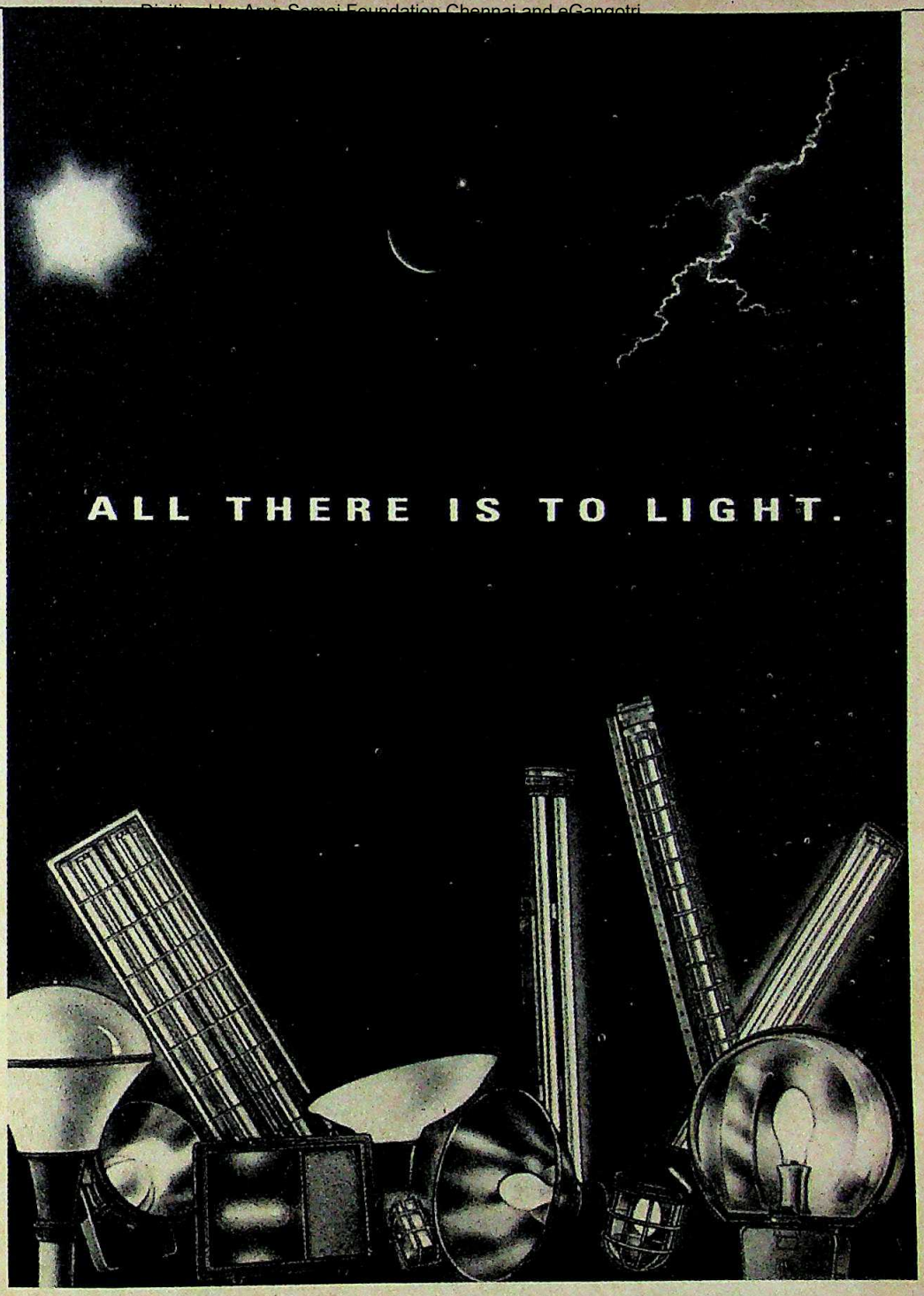

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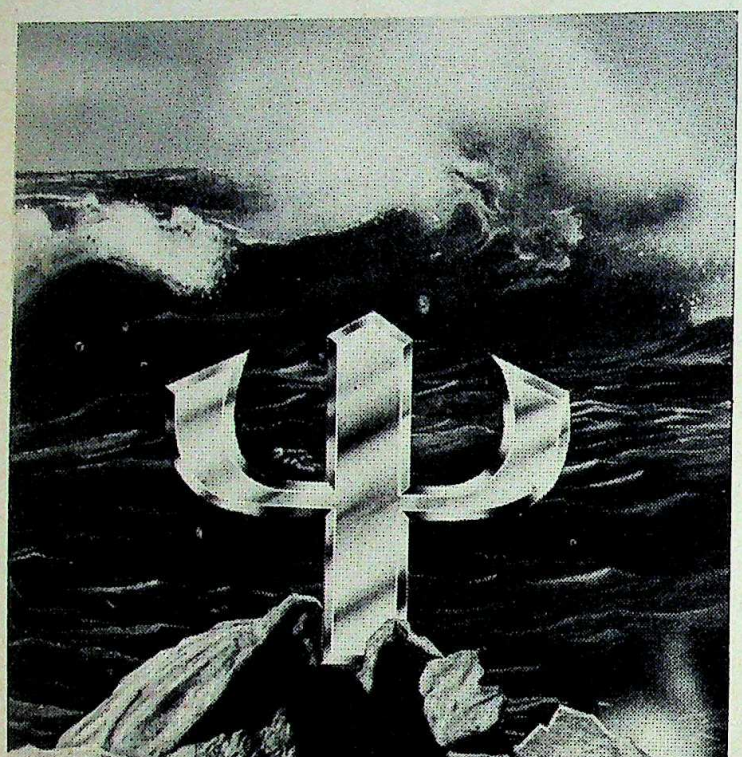

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ECONOMY

Time is Running Out

FINANCE Minister Manmohan Singh will tell you something else, and defend his assertion to the end. But the truth is simple: India, and its economy, is running out of time. To survive, as well as to get the money to do it. And whether one likes it or not, the IMF's so-called conditions have a lot to do with it. The agency, from which India has received $2.8 billion in loans over the past year, works on a few straightforward assumptions. A sample: bring down the budget deficit to the level we want, as well as money supply and inflation. If not—and these yardsticks are monitored every few months—forget about the money.

That is where the problem lies. It isn't as if the finance minister is wrong—under the circumstances, anybody would try and downplay a crisis to boost confidence. But this tends to mask some facts.

The Union budget deficit has to be brought down to 6.5 per cent of the gross domestic product by end-March next, from the previous year's level of 8.6 per cent. A way to go about it is to reduce government expenditure and raise revenue efficiently. The problem is: not much has been done about the first and as for the second, customs collections are expected to fall short by Rs 3,500 crore, and excise inflows by about Rs 1,000 crore. Revenue officials are being pressed to increase the flow but don't know how to.

According to the latest figures, industrial production is slackening off—the growth rate is minus 1.4 per cent a year—and the manufacturing index has dipped to minus 2.8 per cent. This is a result of the import restrictions and the credit squeeze, and unless something is done soon—the only way out: easing off on both fronts—things can only get worse. Already, there is a depressing portent: net profit for companies may grow only between 15 and 20 per cent for the current financial year, as compared to double that two years ago.

The figures may seem dismal, but that is just the result of Manmohan Singh taking on the easier problems first. Import compression and the credit squeeze affects people across the counter. And there is a feeling that these measures are necessary to conserve reserves, and by making money expensive, force industry to trim fat, work with less and increase productivity. The pinch is already being felt, but most have accepted this as necessary, bitter medicine.

The problem is that the situation can get worse. The going will get really tough if the finance minister follows up his brave talk with action, and reforms the entire system. And it will get very tough even if he doesn't. The first is bad for the Government and the second, for the economy.

Take privatisation, for instance. Already, Singh's own colleagues are knocking disinvestment by the public sector, and all the finance minister can say in defence is watch and wait. No guarantees. This Government and its attendant bureaucracy are loathe to give up control of anything that remotely reduces its control over power and public money. On the other hand, if the finance minister sticks to his promise of partially selling off equity in the public sector, the exchequer stands to gain Rs 2,500 crore in revenue with the first lot of sales. Singh needs to go through with this immediately—despite any opposition—and more importantly, ensure that the money earned isn't used to feed unproductive state expenses.

Or, take the exit policy. Manmohan Singh prefers to call it "redeployment", but that's it. No movement—for the sake of labour angst, union ego, and a blind belief that liberal labour laws in a liberal economic environment will lead to large-scale unemployment. Or the bureaucracy. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao gets angry when quizzed on this, and retorts "no bureaucrat will sit on clearances", but they do. New agencies of a streamlined economy have only replaced—not lessened—earlier controls. The feeling in business circles plays out this fact: how is it that we still feel trapped despite the most radical reforms ever?

There is simply no time to play around with options, cliches or platitudes. If the Government doesn't take on the difficult options now, including cutting its own expenses—and for once, government expedience be damned—India will never get out of its unproductive mould. That will only mean increasing revenue needs, increased foreign debt, incessant squeezing of industry, less money, more deficits—by printing more money to fill the gap—and runaway inflation. If it's a deed versus doomsday, Manmohan Singh must choose the first option. It's infinitely easier to live with.

—SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI

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MANMOHAN SINGH

"There are no short cuts"

FIVE months isn't a long time for a country in the economic doldrums for the past four decades. Then again, the crisis has never been as acute. Finance Minister Manmohan Singh knows it better than anyone else, and has been in the hot seat, trying to unscramble a hopelessly scrambled system. Only, he doesn't call it hopeless, because that would be the end of the game. His own report card: some successes, and a long way to go with deficits, inflation, industrial activity, foreign investment and the exit policy. He spoke on these and other issues with Editor AROON PURIE, *Business Editor* SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI *and Principal Correspondent* SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR *last fortnight. Excerpts from the exclusive interview:*

Q. How successful do you think you have been so far?

A. I look at the problem in terms of our objectives—immediate, short- and medium-term. In June, we were on the verge of default. Our reserves were about Rs 2,500 crore. My immediate objective was to reverse this trend and I have succeeded. Today our reserves exceed Rs 8,000 crore. More commercial banks are willing to look at India as a viable long-term proposition. We could not have done this if we did not have IMF and World Bank support. It was essential to create a feeling of confidence in the international community—a feeling that India can grapple with its problems, that India should be supported in its endeavours. And we have done it. There has been a change from the mood of despondency and despair to one of hope and confidence.

Secondly, I wanted to set in motion a process whereby, in a short period of time, we could bring down the inflation rate. I did recognise that devaluation, reducing fertiliser and sugar subsidies would feed inflationary expectations. I was hopeful that by October 1, I would start a downward trend in prices. Already, there has been a slight decline in inflation from the peak of 16.5 per cent. We are now running at 13.3 per cent.

Q. But you had said single-digit inflation....

A. I had said I would like to see that by the end of the fiscal year. But I would have liked to see a sharper dip than has taken place. Here, I think ours is a mixed record.

Q. So that is your failing?

A. Part of the problem is that success creates problems. If reserves go up, you can liberalise. But I want to be sure that this is a one-time increase in reserves or a systematic structural improvement in reserves. Until I have the feeling of confidence, I cannot let all import curbs go.

Q. But aren't you liberalising?

A. Gradually. If I know that this is a permanent improvement, we would have liberalised in a big way which could dampen inflationary expectations very significantly. The economy has been living on accumulated stocks of raw materials since the import squeeze. We have begun the process of reversing that but because of this uncertainty, I have not liberalised imports as much as I would have liked.

Q. Why are agricultural prices so high?

A. Part of the problem is, as I have said, inflationary expectations and the fact that we raised fertiliser prices very significantly. So far, the fact that we are trying to dampen money supply very considerably has not been felt. In the next two or three months, if we do the right things, it would be felt.

Q. What are these right things?

A. Liberalise imports, for instance, to dampen the growth of money supply.

Q. Could the rise in prices be because people doubt your ability to tackle inflation, a result of a lack of confidence?

A. First of all, if there is no confidence, people would not be sending money to our country. Reserves would not be rising.

Q. Do we expect an austere budget?

A. I don't want to answer any questions about the budget, but I have said this is not a one-shot operation. My medium-term objective is structural reform which deals with the underlying causes of low productivity, investment, public sector inefficiency...it will take three to four years before the whole fiscal system is set right. We have given the right signals about the direction in which to move. We now have to widen and deepen these things.

Q. Why have foreign investors not responded well?

A. I'm not surprised. I did not expect foreign investment pouring in overnight. Over time, if we persist, there will be a substantial flow. But India's basic problems can only be solved by raising the domestic saving rate, by increasing productivity, having a more competitive economy, and a much more vibrant export sector.

Q. But do you have an internal support system?

"Let no one feel that the country is out of danger. If the process is derailed we'll be worse off than we were earlier."

"This is not a one-shot operation. It will take years to set the whole fiscal system right."

"The rupee will be convertible as soon as possible. The dangers would be minimal, if there is fiscal control."

"Action against public sector units can be taken more smoothly with less tardiness and delay than against the private sector."

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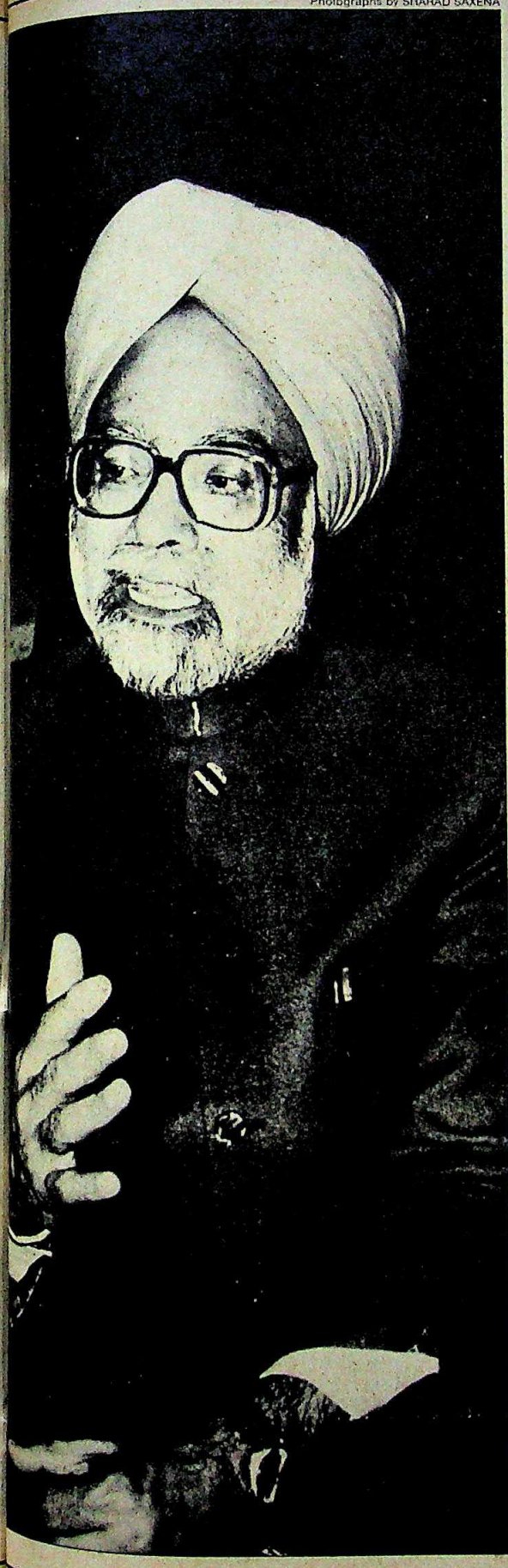

A. The fact that all these measures have gone through is evidence of the support. Take what we are doing about sick units. We have, for the first time in this country, created an awareness that sickness has to be attended to on a priority basis. We cannot continue to put money into loss-making units year after year—even those who oppose us in public, in Parliament, recognise the value of this.

Q. *How do you actually get rid of people, and close units?*

A. If we can convince the workers that in some units, a part can be made viable, a part has to close down.... The term 'exit policy' is a misnomer. It is actually a policy of redeployment to assure workers that in the stage of transition, even if they have to change jobs, we will not throw them to the mercy of the market forces. BIFR is also a solution.

Q. *The findings of the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction* (BIFR) *can be challenged in any high court....*

A. I said in the House that the BIFR was so slow because it was dealing with the private sector. But where Government as the promoter, is satisfied, and the BIFR is convinced, the Government does not have to go to a high court.

Q. *Will you let the* BIFR *take posession of company assets and allow them to sell?*

A. The case of the public sector units will proceed much more smoothly, with much less tardiness and delay, than has been the case with the private sector.

Q. *But are you not side-stepping the issue?*

A. Where the industrial sector does not generate large-scale employment, the process will give rise to excessive fears that overnight you are going to create mass unemployment. If we were operating in an authoritarian system, I could ride roughshod. I am convinced the path we have adopted is the right one. Even trade union leaders in private come and tell me that they recognise that patently sick units need to be closed down. They are not saying "don't do it" but "could you tell us how you are going to deal with the problem".

Q. *What about introducing hire and fire for private sector? Employers should be able to rid workers from their present jobs and help them readjust into other jobs. Why can't you take that as an option?*

A. I am not saying this is not an option. But all these require preconditions to be effective. If we create a system of social insurance, we can create a more congenial environment. Once we have this credible security, we can then discuss the issue much more objectively.

Q. *But you have to bite the bullet at some stage.*

A. You cannot fight on all fronts. Simultaneously, you have to have a sense of strategy and I think our challenge is to create an environment in which structural reform can take place with the assurance that this is not just for the benefit of a few but for the benefit of many.

Q. *Is the Government really serious about privatisation? Will it transfer ownership of units to the private sector or only sell a minority stake in some companies?*

A. At the moment we are thinking only of minority shares.

Q. *Why have your colleagues said there will be no privatisation? Why does your government speak in different voices?*

A. I have stated the position of the Government in the budget. We will do it. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Q. *Won't your reform strategy fall apart if deficit and inflation aren't controlled in as little as six months?*

A. I am hopeful that the deficit will be controlled in the manner in which I have said it will, to 6.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). I have enough time.

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Q. While you have made some effort to cut the budget deficit, why is there no real action in terms of cutting government expenditure...?

A. I took measures which hurt 70 per cent of the population (through cuts in fertiliser subsidies) and yet people say I have done nothing.

Q. Don't you need to do much more to reduce government expenditure in terms of infrastructure?

A. We have not had time, just five months. All this will come. These are not things which can be done overnight.

Q. Why is there an estimated Rs 3,500-crore fall in customs duty collection...?

A. We expect a shortfall in customs revenue. But I cannot swear by any definite figures. I do hope to make it up substantially. Because only if we start the liberalisation of imports, can we begin this process.

"Our efforts to dampen money supply have not been felt. But now if we do the right things, it will be."

Q. When will the credit squeeze start easing up?

A. It should start easing now. We have tied up our structural adjustment loans and money is freely coming in. We have to be cautious, and proceed at a pace we can sustain.

Q. Do you have any short-term plans to reduce the deficit?

A. The deficit, as I said, will be 6.5 per cent of the GDP. Only three months are left (for the budget).

Q. So how will the magic number be realised?

A. I think you are far too interested in the budget details.

Q. What is it that you fear may go awry?

A. If import compression lasts too long then stagflation can happen, revenue calculations can go down. If inflation is not under control, that could erode confidence in the system. These are the worries I have.

Q. What about the slowdown in industrial production?

A. For a 2-per cent reduction in domestic absorption over a short period, either consumption or investment has to fall. Until last year we used to get Rs 4,000 crore from foreign commercial bankers that is not available to us now. A net amount of Rs 2,500 crore would come from NRIs. That is not available—this is the adjustment we have to impose on our economy.

Q. Is not decrease in exports a area of great concern?

A. In the short-term, I never expected a big bang. Particularly because of events in the Soviet Union and dependence on imports. I have evidence that in the months to come, exports should do much better.

Q. Why has deregulation not taken place in the Finance Ministry itself? Why haven't you abolished the Department of Banking and the post of Controller of Capital Issues?

A. Regarding the function of the Controller, we will do away with those which have outlived their utility and those functions which are still useful will be transferred to the Securities and Exchange Board of India. As soon as the legislation becomes effective, we will act.

"I am hopeful that the deficit will be controlled, as I have said. I have enough time."

There is no department of banking. Let me tell you that it's only a division that answers questions in Parliament most of the time. Bankers also play politics.

Q. What is your wishful thinking?

A. I wish all departments of government were doing things with much greater speed. I don't want to create the feeling that this country is out of danger. Let nobody get the feeling that the fundamentals in the Indian economy have changed remarkably. If the process is derailed, we could go down. We'll be worse off because next time you will not have the support of the international community.

"The credit squeeze should start easing now. We've tied up our loans and money is freely coming in."

"Even trade union leaders admit the need for sick units to be closed down. They are asking us how to do it."

Q. When do you think the rupee will be made convertible?

A. As soon as possible. I cannot predict that. If I can get control of the fiscal situation, if I can get administered prices freed, then the dangers to a convertible currency regime are minimal. My only worry is that if you have too many administered prices and things are imported, there is a danger the fiscal system will not absorb the flak, subsidies will grow and you will have the Latin American type of cycle.

Q. Have you come up against any bottlenecks?

A. Five months is too early a period to judge. I have not gone into it in great detail. But how much industry takes advantage of these opportunities, whether it likes competition or is afraid of competition, whether foreign investors will take advantage....

Q. How is Pakistan moving faster than us in liberalising its economy?

A. The whole institution base there is of a very small group of people: civil servants, politicians. We have a more open, functional polity in which consensus has to be the norm.

Q. Are you optimistic?

A. The future is inherently uncertain. ■

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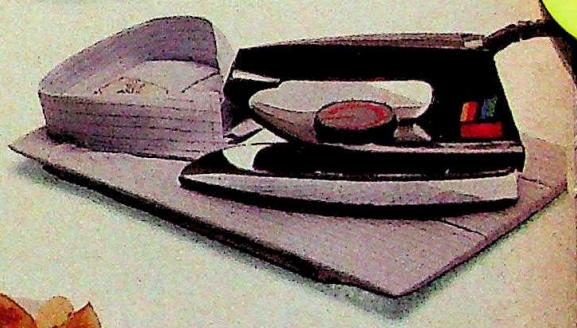

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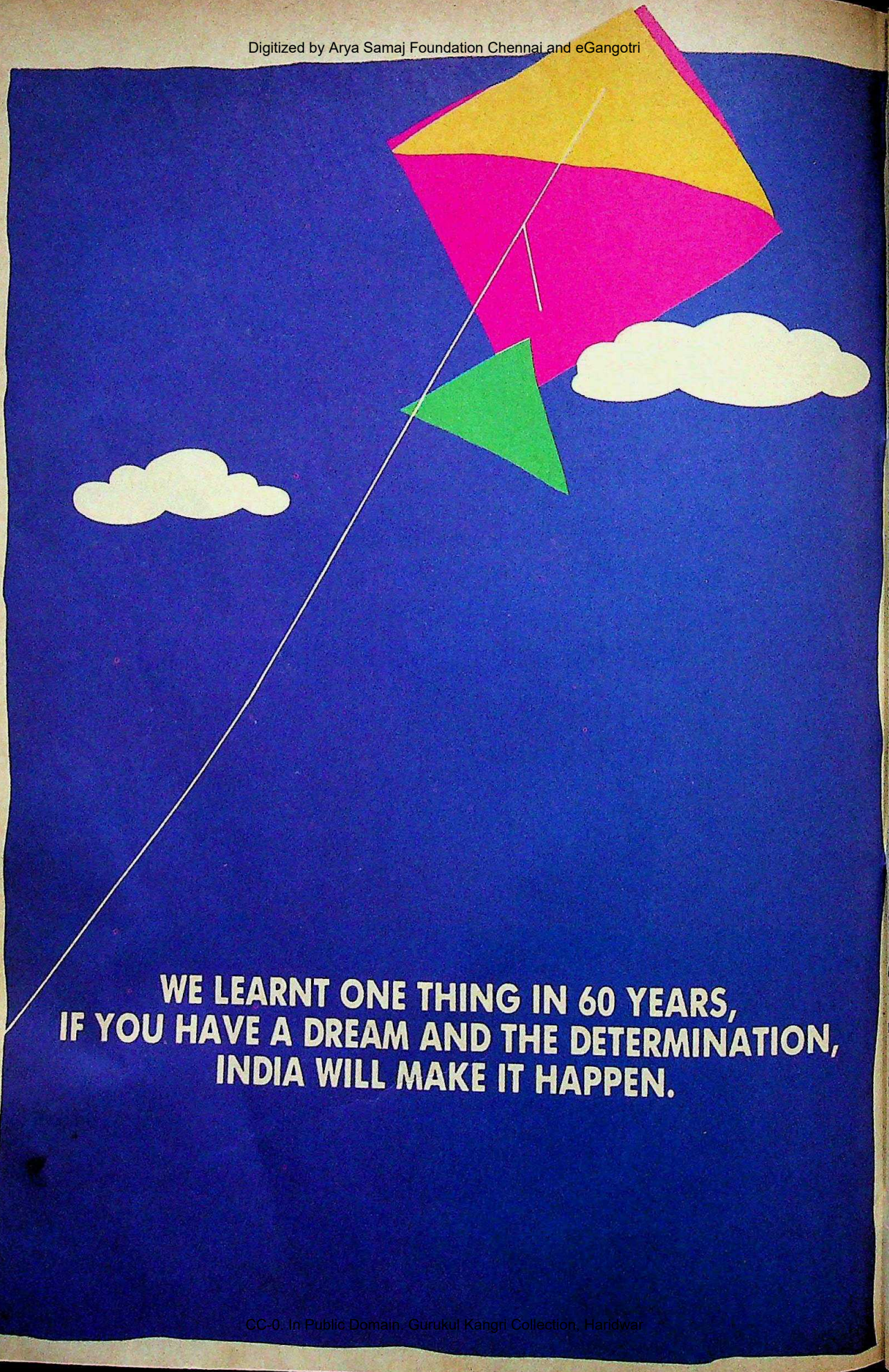

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SEBI

Arresting Moves

Strict measures proposed to curb insider trading

IN the stock-market business, it is going to be a tug-of-war to see who laughs last. the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) or a legion of companies and market operators who practise insider trading. A new SEBI-sponsored paper, called *Draft of Insider Trading Regulations* proposes tough civil and criminal penalties for anyone who uses access to confidential, price-sensitive information relating to securities of any company for profit in the stock-market.

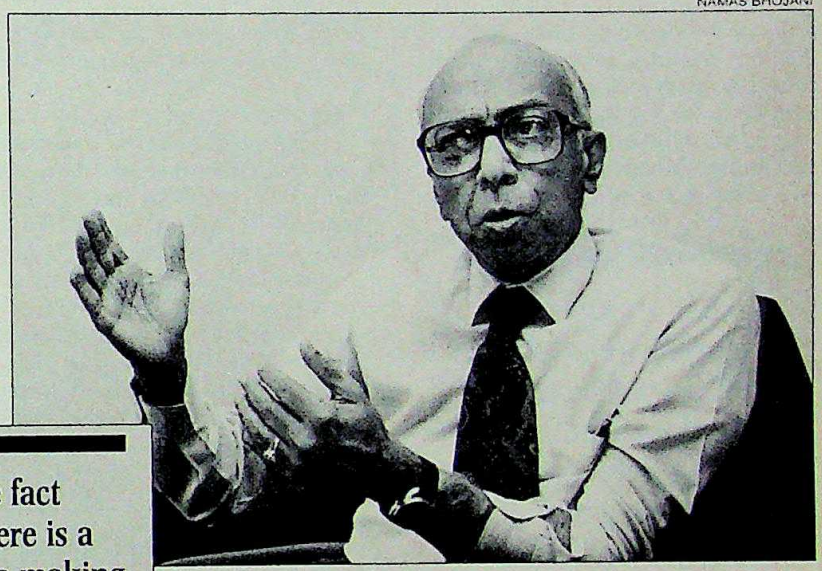
This is a prelude to formal insider trading regulations—it could be tabled during the Budget session of Parliament early next year—which will rap all those in this lucrative line with penalties. They are: a fine not exceeding three times the profit gained or loss avoided in a deal. Or, two years rigorous imprisonment, or a fine of Rs 5 lakh, or both. If the law is passed, it would make insider trading a crime—a first for India. Today, India's stock-markets thrive on insider trading. And no one's ever been fined, far less been jailed, for it.

But it will be very difficult to follow through, even if the law is passed. In the absence of computerised transactions, unlike in the West—which makes it easy to track a buyer, seller, volume of transaction and the time, as well as the price a scrip is bought or sold at—keeping a tab on who's doing what in the market is almost impossible. Even if the SEBI is given every imaginable policing power. "Even on Wall Street it's not easy to nail a guy," says Amar Sukhi, a Bombay-based securities dealer, fresh from a two-year stint trading stocks and bonds in the US. "The idea of getting a conviction in India is worse."

There is also the bigger question of where you start. "At least 75 per cent of Indian companies and their managements are guilty," says a top Bombay broker. "And the Unit Trust of India (UTI), which has its directors on the boards of most companies, has the biggest potential for violation." UTI is the largest single investor in the stock-markets, with a kitty of over Rs 10,000 crore. There are various ways in which companies—in connivance with stock-brokers—play the game. For instance, buying up shares of one's own company before announcing a public issue. Once the announcement comes through, prices rise, bringing sure profit. Or, buying shares in a target company before announcing a merger or takeover. Or, scheming with brokers to ensure share prices don't drop below a particular level—good for investor morale.

SEBI Chairman G.V. Ramakrishna is unfazed by the dampers and feels the existence of a law will check this activity substantially. "The fact that there is a regulation which makes it illegal, that allows for investigation which could result in prosecution and perhaps," he says, "conviction, is in itself a deterrent." However, he agrees that in developed countries, despite tough laws, prosecutions are few, convictions fewer, and insider trading is rampant. Says Ramakrishna: "Even after 40 years it has not been curbed in these countries, but people have been checked to some extent." That, he feels, is reason enough to go for legislation in India. According to the SEBI paper, the agency—which hasn't any real powers—proposes to investigate insider trading on the basis of market information or on receiving a complaint. It may appoint inspectors to investigate the case and submit a report, on the basis of which the offender could be prosecuted.

NAMAS BHOJANI



G.V.Ramakrishna, Chairman, SEBI

"The fact that there is a regulation making it illegal, that can result in conviction, could prove a deterrent."

The paper has been sent to stock exchanges, financial institutions, brokers, mutual funds, merchant bankers and others in the securities market. The SEBI has requested feedback by January 15, before drafting final regulations.

The agency may not have to wait that long for responses. "Information is commonly

PROPOSED PENALTIES

- **A fine up to three times the amount of profit or loss prevented in a deal.**
- **A jail sentence of up to two years rigorous imprisonment.**
- **A flat fine of Rs 5 lakh.**
- **A Rs 5-lakh fine and imprisonment.**

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imparted," says Nimesh Shah, managing director of Enam Finance and a very influential Bombay-based broker. "You may meet someone at a party and pass on some information in small talk. Is this insider trading?" With regulations, he says, companies will have reservations about how much they can inform investors. It is a weak defence. Anyway, companies don't let on much, and most insider trading deals—at least the heavy-duty ones—don't start at social gatherings but in offices.

SEBI's inspiration has been culled after studying insider trading regulations in the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and Singapore, among others. But the statistics in some of these countries don't look good enough to look up to for inspiration. In the UK, only 22 prosecutions and less than half that number of convictions came out of 185 cases in the past four years. In

SEBI proposes to investigate insider trading on the basis of market information or on receiving a complaint.

Japan and particularly, the US, the ratios are equally depressing, despite headline-grabbing trials of Wall Streeters such as Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken. "The effectiveness of the law depends on the enforcement machinery," says Bombay Stock Exchange Executive Director M.R. Mayya. Point. But the thing is, enforcement machinery here is far more lax than that of the West.

However, SEBI officials say that for the benefit of scoffers—who say that law doesn't eradicate crime—laws should be done away with. "There are stringent laws in Japan, and there are also a number of instances of insider trading," says Pratip Kar, a division chief with SEBI. "This doesn't mean Japan should forget its insider trading laws." Standard argument, and besides, there is no insider trading law in India yet. While the move to get them going is laudable—and necessary, as the markets here are entirely lawless—it will be quite a while yet before India throws up its own Ivan Boesky.

—LEKHA RATTANANI

BUSINESSPEAK

L.M. THAPAR

"Nothing is Automatic"

DESPITE the sweeping changes that the Government has announced, the results have been nowhere near what were expected. Procedures have been liberalised on paper, politicians are afraid to go all the way and bureaucrats are not very sure they want to, either. Meanwhile, curbs on imports and credit are still in force and even if these are eased soon, it can only be marginal. This strait-jacketing is squeezing industry, says L.M. Thapar, who runs a Rs 3,000-crore empire, and is in businesses as diverse as textiles, newspaper and electronics. Senior Correspondent SUNIL JAIN *met him in New Delhi last fortnight, to talk about the current impasse.*

THE Government has announced a lot of changes and liberalisation, but they have to protocol these quickly. Take all the industrial policy statements that have been made. None of these have been implemented yet. And until that is done, the bureaucracy still has a say in the matter. Nothing is 'automatic'. If you had 10 hurdles earlier, now you have five—you can kill a man only once, not 10 times!

Since there is no project that does not involve foreign exchange, the restrictions on industry remain. The fact of the matter is that you cannot export without imports. Well, the finance minister has said that he will liberalise when the forex situation improves. I'm still waiting for that day. The point is, this is all completely irrelevant. The Government has already said that it possesses no foreign exchange. Importers have been told that they have to earn their own foreign exchange or buy EXIM scrips. Fine, given the shortage of reserves. But once you've done this, why put more obstacles in the way?

You can put in any system, there'll always be a few crooks to exploit it. They did this under the earlier restrictive system as well. Don't get so frightened of a few crooks, and make the system cumbersome. Which is what we've always done in the past. We've been so scared each time we liberalised. We open one porthole and say: "My God. They're going to take advantage of it, so let's put six more barriers to make sure they don't." You're worse off than when you started.

Take the case of the so-called "automatic clearance" for foreign investment. Once the rules have been laid down regarding funding of the project, foreign exchange neutrality, and so on, why must you go to the RBI for clearance? Sure, the RBI says it will clear the proposal in 14 days. But all they have to do is to say that one of the questions has not been answered properly, and your proposal is rejected. This is really the reluctance of the bureaucrat to let go of things.

The Foreign Investment Promotion Board is a start as far as cutting bureaucracy is concerned. But surely they should have associated industrialists and businessmen in this investment promotion effort. While the secretaries are wise men, their experience in selling industrial India may not be that sound. After all, it came out very clearly in the Indo-US Joint Business Council meeting—held last month—that the Americans weren't even aware of the changes we have made. In contrast, the Pakistan Government is taking out full-page advertisements in *The Wall Street Journal* and what-have-you telling you about their liberalisation, with a photograph of Nawaz Sharif at the bottom saying: "Come, invest in Pakistan."

As for the exit policy, I believe that if you don't have one, then everything you've done so far becomes meaningless. I can't say for sure that the Government will go through with it. But, if they don't have the courage to go the whole hog, they might as well forget the rest of it too—go back to the old regime. ■

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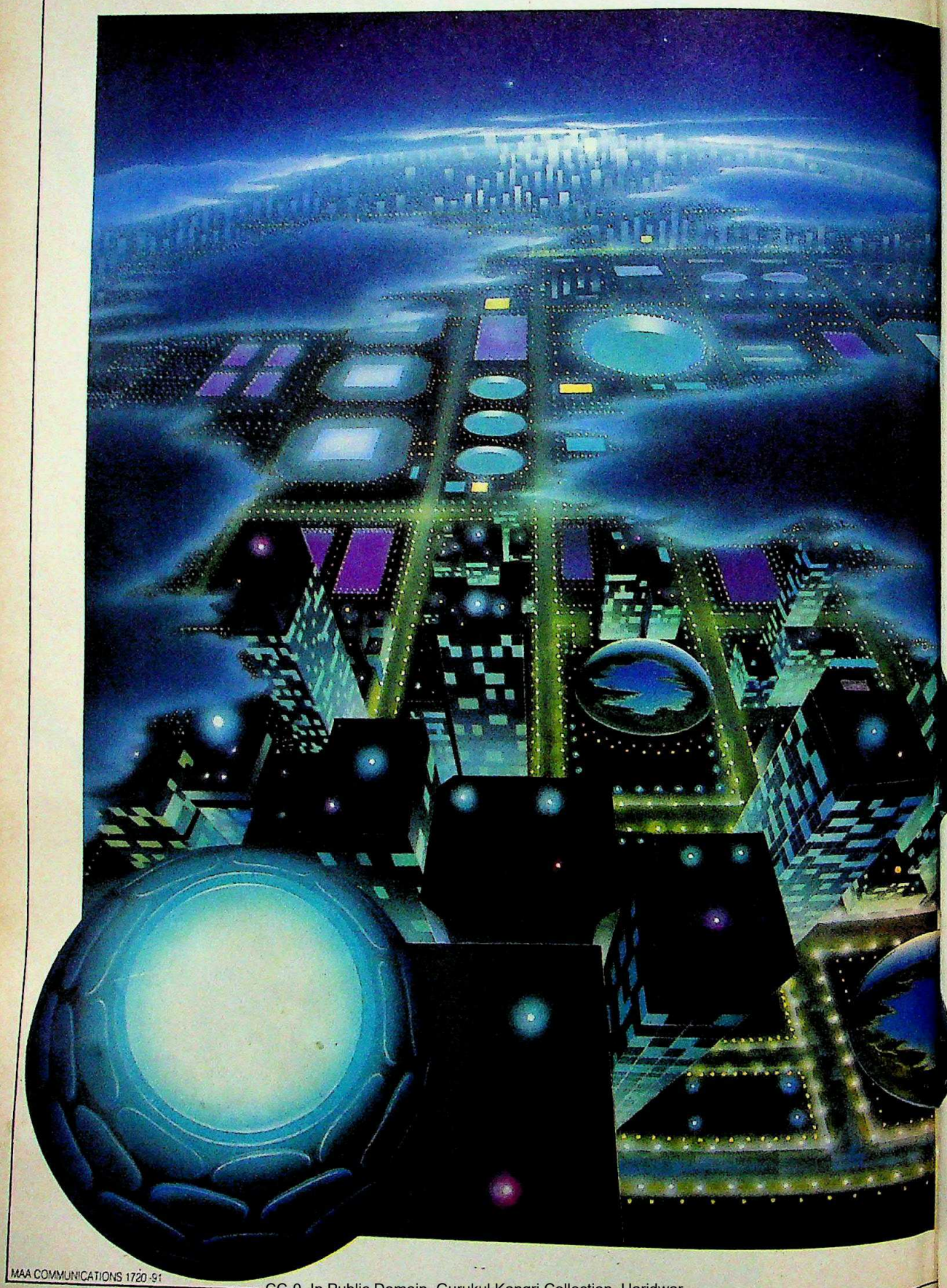

MAA COMMUNICATIONS 1720-91

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When India's demand reaches 200,000 MW, where will the electricity come from ?

The global village you see in the picture is called India. North Delhi is in the foreground.

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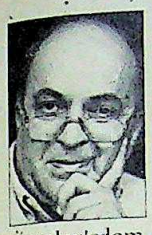
Financing the Future



THIS time, I will deal with the subject of printing more money, rather than raising taxes, in an attempt to offset government deficits. In all probability, like most unconventional wisdom, it will fall on deaf ears.

As we are all aware, the next budget is going to be crucial to the policy of economic reforms. Finance Minister Manmohan Singh is under severe pressure, not only from both the IMF and the World Bank, but also from his own inclination, to reduce the budget deficit to a smaller percentage of the Gross Domestic Product. On this subject I know of no other person—no economist, no businessman, no journalist—who holds the opposite point of view. I have, however, learnt from my market experience that when everyone is bullish it's a sure indication that it is time to sell, and when all turn bearish, the opportunity for buying has indeed arrived.

Perhaps this market analogy is inappropriate for the serious business of budget making, but I strongly believe that at this stage of our reforms, higher budget deficits will prove less harmful than any of the other alternatives that the finance minister contemplates. You only need to look at what has happened this year. Through raising taxes on company profits and squeezing imports, the country has virtually been brought to the verge of a recession.

This situation will only intensify as the finance minister tries to reduce budget deficits by administering more of the same medicine. Fiscal and monetary corrections are all very well if the instruments of taxation and subsidy can be concentrated on those sections of the economy that should bear the burden; but this is exactly what the finance minister cannot do. Just consider the catalogue of people he cannot tax or expenditure he cannot possibly reduce.

He is unable either to tax farmers or take away their subsidies; he cannot tax exporters; he cannot tax tax-evaders; he must continue infrastructural investment; he needs to provide for debt repayments; he is required to continue welfare programmes; and he ought to maintain defence expenditure. When this catalogue is complete, you are left with the perennial Indian tax sources. Excise duty, import duty, an increase in administered prices and some direct taxes that yield very little revenue but ensure that tax evasion takes place on a much larger scale.

In this environment, the standard IMF formula of raising taxes and reducing government expenditure is of little use. Berating the profligacy of governments is merely the familiar invocative prayer of economists who have ceased to apply their mind to the problem at hand. It goes with the general nostrums—the Government should improve tax administration, control unproductive expenditure, reduce defence commitments by showing brotherly love for neighbours, and in general apply all the principles of good motherhood that are to be found in Dr Benjamin Spock's famous book on bringing up children.

The simple formula for the finance minister is to reform taxes and allow the budget deficit to rise to the necessary level.

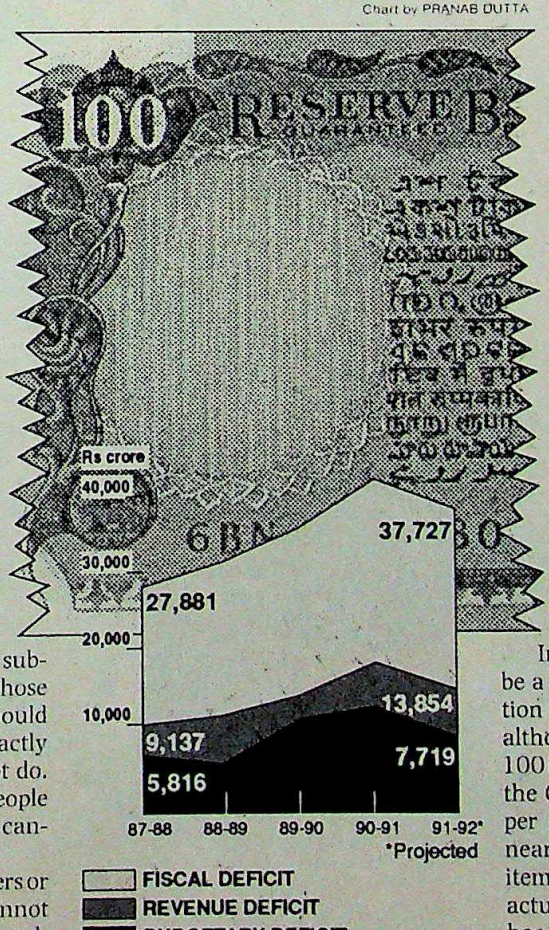
The reality is that it is not possible for the finance minister to prevent corruption in administration, reduce expenditure on military weapons at a time when the nation is about to break up, nor is he in a position to apply massive cuts on infrastructural investments within a short period of time. Yet, if he continues his attempt to reduce the budget deficit by increasing tariffs and taxes, he will have missed the chance for reform that the country requires so urgently.

I believe that the simple formula the finance minister should apply this time round is to reform taxes and allow the budget deficit to rise to whatever level is necessary. I shall, therefore, divide the rest of this paper into, first, a brief discussion on the reforms that have now become absolutely essential, and second, on my views on the merits and consequences of deficit financing.

It seems to me that there are four areas of fiscal reform that require urgent attention. First: tariffs; second: excise duty and administered prices; third: company tax; and finally: the system of direct taxes.

In the case of tariffs, there seems to be a general agreement that a reduction in rates is long overdue. In fact, although nominal rates range from 100 to 150 per cent, the actual revenue the Government collects is hardly 60 per cent. This is because there are nearly 1,500 exceptions for a range of items which dramatically reduce the actual rate that is applicable. The time has come to make a clean sweep of this

Chart by PRANAB DUTTA



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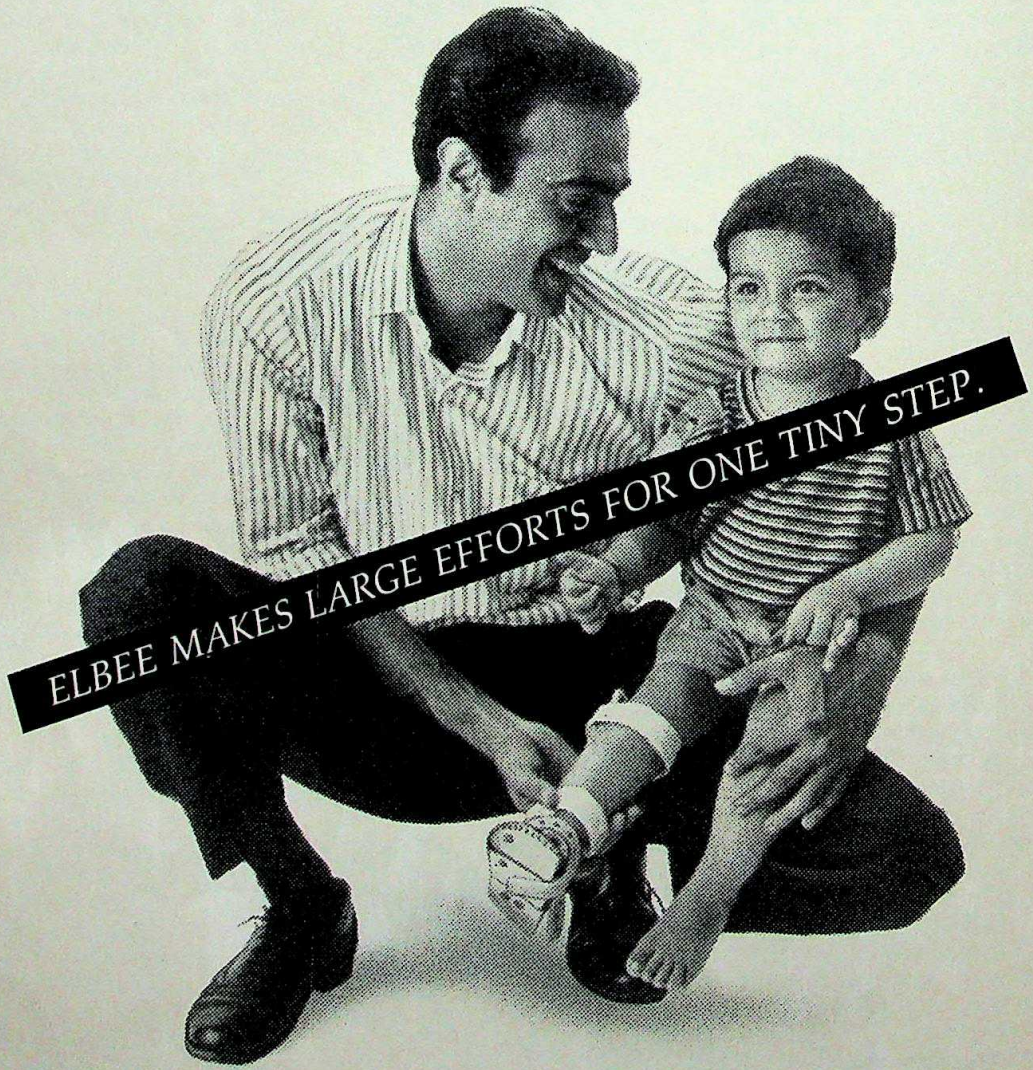

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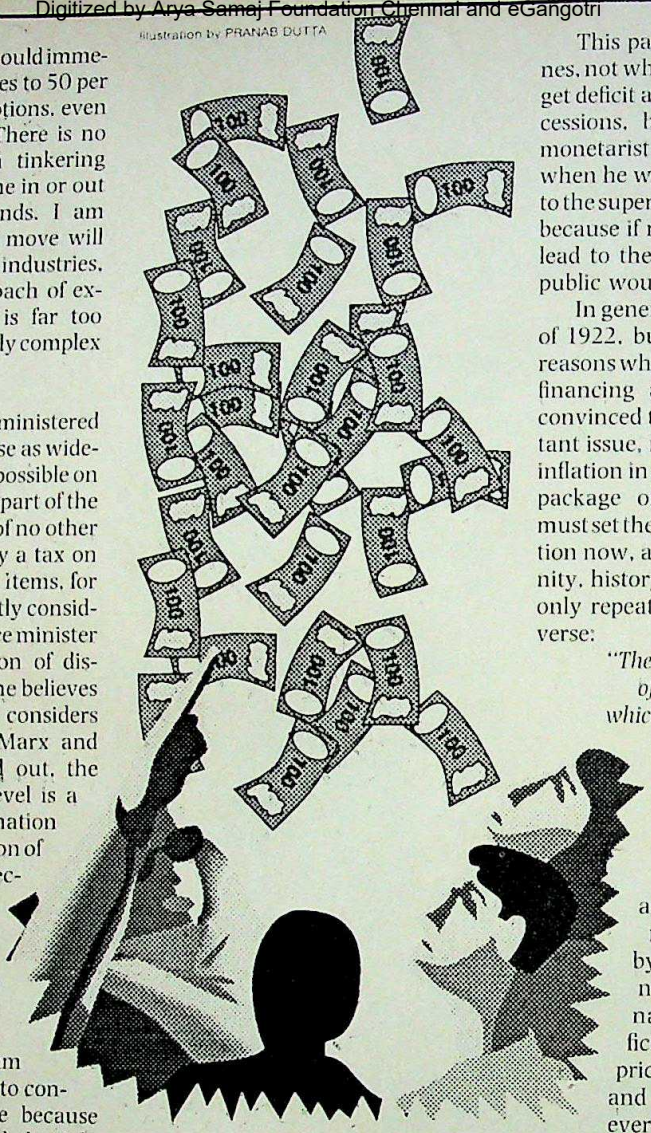
jungle. The Government should immediately reduce nominal rates to 50 per cent and abolish all exemptions, even those given to charities. There is no longer any advantage in tinkering with a structure that no one in or out of government comprehends. I am aware that such a drastic move will raise an outcry from some industries, but the case-by-case approach of exceptions and exemptions is far too difficult to manage in a highly complex economy like India.

ON excise duty and administered prices, I would propose as widespread a reduction as possible on items that form an essential part of the consumer's basket. I know of no other country that levies so heavy a tax on food and clothing as we do. Items, for example sugar, are apparently considered 'luxuries' but the finance minister should avoid the temptation of discriminating between what he believes are luxuries and what he considers necessities. As both Karl Marx and Adam Smith have pointed out, the concept of a subsistence level is a rising one, and the discrimination he applies is simply a reflection of official thinking, and not necessarily that of the world at large.

On corporate and direct taxes, I would only comment that these are simply taxes on savings and therefore, undesirable. I am aware that it is fashionable to consider these taxes equitable because they fall largely upon the rich, but I do not believe that to be a sufficient argument for raising them continuously. However, the principal thrust of my argument does not depend on equity, but instead, on the fact that India cannot integrate with the world economy unless she harmonises her tax system with what is acceptable elsewhere. If India fails to do so, she is sure to face a flight of capital when the rupee is made convertible. The steps that should be taken fall beyond the scope of this article; suffice it to say that other countries do not have wealth tax, nor do they tax companies as heavily as we do in India.

If the choice is between inflationary indirect taxes and inflationary deficit financing, the latter has some merit. As John Maynard Keynes points out: "It is the form of taxation which the public finds hardest to evade and even the weakest government can enforce, when it can enforce nothing else.... The burden of the tax is well spread, cannot be evaded, costs nothing to collect, and falls in a rough sort of way, in proportion to the wealth of the victim. No wonder its superficial advantages have attracted innumerable ministers of finance."

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA



THE WAY AHEAD

- **Reduce tariff rates, excise duties and administered prices.**
- **Do away with corporate and other direct taxes.**
- **Raise budget deficit to fill the gap—besides, inflation is a more equitable tax.**

This passage was written by Keynes, not when he was advocating budget deficit as a way of pulling out of recessions, but when he was at his monetarist best in 1922. It was a time when he warned against succumbing to the superficial advantages of the tax, because if repeated too often, it could lead to the type of inflation that the public would not tolerate.

In general, I agree with the Keynes of 1922, but there are at least three reasons why I am an advocate of deficit financing at this time. First, I am convinced that by far the most important issue, more important than even inflation in the Indian economy, is the package of economic reforms. We must set the course for the next generation now, and if we miss this opportunity, history will not forgive us. I can only repeat Shakespeare's oft-quoted verse:

"There is a tide in the affairs
of men,
which taken at the flood leads
on to good fortune,
Omitted all the
voyage of their life,
Is bound in shallows and miseries."

We must not on any account allow the essential reforms to be subverted by immediate political necessities. When the finance minister assumed office, he made it plain that prices cannot be rolled back, and he must now take whatever risk is needed to push the reforms through.

Second, in an economy where so many cannot be taxed, deficit financing is the only fair tax. For, as Keynes points out, no one can evade it and the burden falls evenly on everyone in rough proportion to their wealth. I would not want more from any tax than that.

Finally, I happen to believe that deficit financing in a country like India is less inflationary than the continuous rise in indirect taxes that has been the hall mark of all budgets. Any tax, if repeated too often, diminishes in its value, and deficit financing is no exception. But there are good standard Keynesian arguments to suggest that when there are unused resources, such as labour, deficit finance still has a role to play.

(The author is a Delhi-based economist-cum-businessman.)

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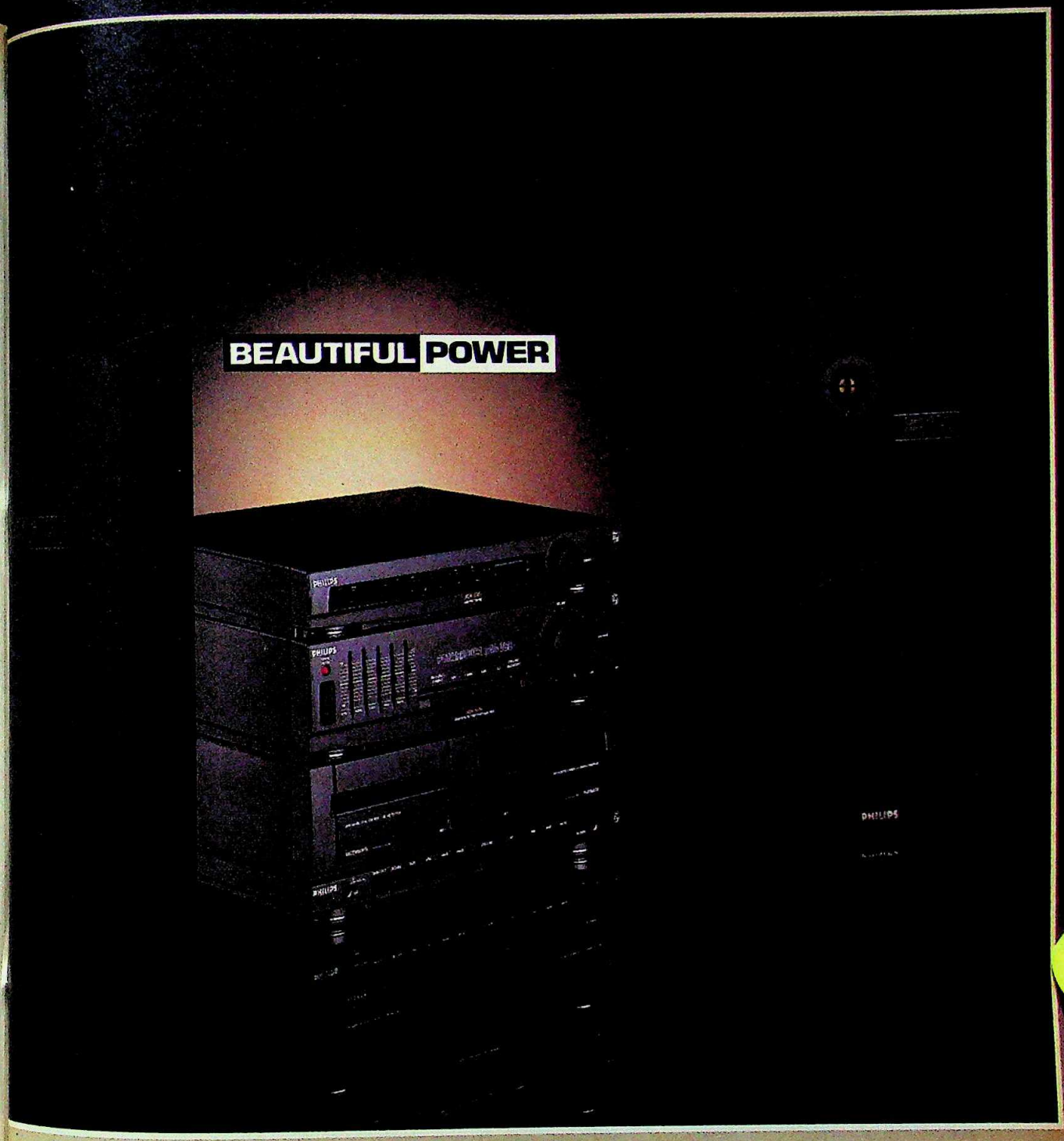

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It's a pleasure setting an industry record. And a greater one breaking it.

Jaypee Rewa Cement Plant — Unit I and Unit II.

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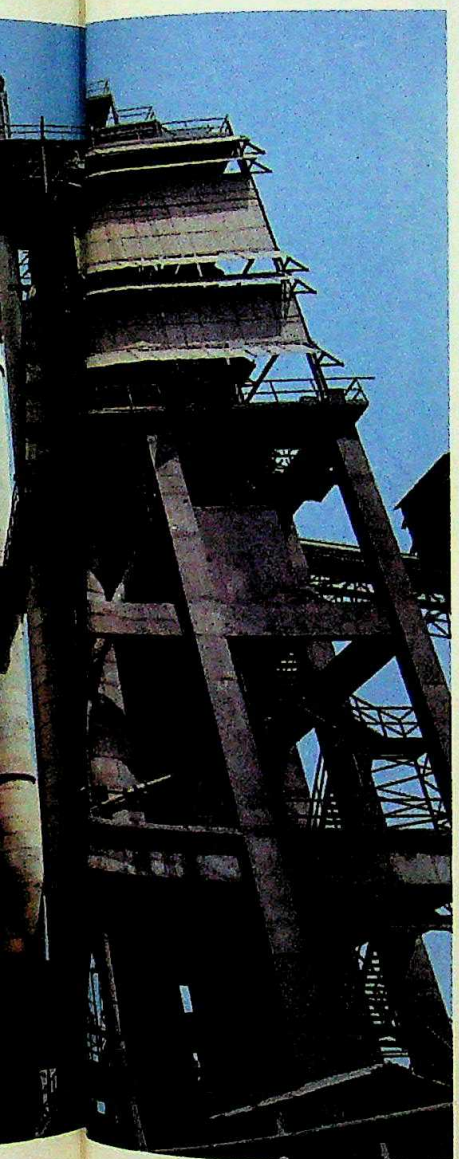

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It is such record breaking performances that have helped us grow from strength to strength.

Growing five-fold, in less than a decade, to cross a turnover of Rs. 500 crores.

Also, as India's leading construction company, our abilities allow us to build five concrete dams simultaneously.

Today, our interests range from hydel power plants and project exports to the tourism industry.

And while we're confident of setting many more records, we won't rest until we break them.

JAIPRAKASH
INDUSTRIES LIMITED

BUILDING THE FUTURE

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HAWKINS MINIATURE COOKER DEALERS

DELHI

DELHI: Chandni Chowk, BHAGWAN DASS JAGANNATH, 633, Opp. Kucha Natwan • BUDH SINGH & SONS, 1854 • **Fatehpuri,** RAGHUBAR DAYAL & SONS, 6504 • **Gandhi Nagar,** JHANDAMAL KRISHAN LAL, 413/1 • **Kamla Nagar,** CROCKERY EMPORIUM, Shop No. 11 F, 1 • **Karol Bagh,** VISHAL BARTAN BHANDAR, 2568, Ajmal Khan Road • **Kotla Mubarakpur,** BHAGWAN DASS AGGARWAL, 482/1 Subhash Market • **Krishna Nagar,** SRI KRISHNA BARTAN STORE, D 4/1 Lal Quarter Market • **Lajpat Nagar,** NATIONAL BARTAN BHANDAR, 34, Central Market • **Moti Nagar,** BHUTANI BARTAN STORE, Main Market • **Sadar Bazar,** GROVER SONS, 310, Niranjan Estate, Pratap Mkt. • **Sarojini Nagar,** PUNJAB BARTAN STORE, 64, Babu Market • SANKARA BARTAN STORE, 3, Babu Market • VANDANA, 93, Main Market • **Subzi Mandi,** CROCKERY & ALLIED STORE, 1535, Chandrawal Road • **Trinagar,** JAIN ELECTRONICS, 1532, Tota Ram Bazar • **Yusuf Sarai,** JAIN UTENSILS, 15/2 Mandir Wali Galli • LUXMI HOUSEHOLD EMPORIUM, 74/2 • MUNI LAL BISHAN SWARUP, 72/6 • RAM KISHAN & SONS, 72/7.

ANDHRA PRADESH

BHIMAVARAM: P.P. Road, RATNAM ENTERPRISES • **GUNTUR: Brodipet,** RAJYALAKSHMI STEEL HOUSE, 4/1 Lane • **Main Road,** MATTUPALLY SAMBAMOORTHY, Arundalpet • **HANUMAKONDA: Main Road,** RAMESH STEEL PALACE, Near Police Station • **HYDERABAD: Ameerpet,** MAHAVEER STEEL PALACE, Satyam Theatre Road • **Metro Estate,** VISHAL HOME APPLIANCES, Abid Road • **Nampally Station Road,** ANJALI ELECTRONICS, Near Hotel Apsara • STEEL PALACE, Near Hotel Kakatya • **Narayanguda,** CITY EMPORIUM, Near Police Quarters • **Sultan Bazar,** BALIRAM KHIYARAM, Near Veg Market • **KAKINADA: Main Road,** GUPTA EMPORIUM, Surya Rao pet • **KURNOOL: Park Road,** ANDHRA KITCHEN WARES • **MAHABOOB NAGAR: Raichur Road,** NEW GUPTA TRADERS • **RAJAMUNDRY: Near Fort Gate,** ANDHRA MACHINE AGENCIES • **SECUNDERABAD: Rashtrapathy Road:** SAKERMALA STEEL PALACE, Opp. Bata • DECCAN IRON WORKS, Opp. Bata • **VIJAYAWADA: Kaleswara Rao Street,** SRI SATYANARAYANA METALS, Governorpet • **Kothagullu,** SRI VENKATESWARA METAL HOUSE, Seshaiah Street • **Prakasham Road,** JYOTI METALS, Governorpet • **VISAKAPATNAM: Main Road,** BOMBAY GAS LIGHT STORES, Near Kotha Road.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

PASIGHAT: Gandhi Market, ARUNACHAL ELECTRICALS.

ASSAM

DIBRUGARH: H.S. Road, VERMA CROCKERY STORES • **New Market,** S. DATTA & CO. • **GUWAHATI: S.R.C.B. Road,** R. CHAMPAKLAL (ASSAM) & CO. • SHYAM METAL STORES • **NALBARI: N.T. Road,** MARITI ELECTRONICS • **SIBSAGAR: Hospital Road,** ANAMIKA STORES • J.P. Agarwalla Path, HANUMAN BUX PRADIP KUMAR. • **Temple Road,** CHIMANLAL AGARWALLA • **SILCHAR: N.S. Avenue,** RAVI PRAKASH ANAND & CO. • **TINSUKIA: Daily Bazar,** NAZIR AHMED & SONS • **G.N.B. Road,** RAVI PRAKASH ANAND & CO.

BIHAR

BEGUSARAI: I.K.N. Market, BIHAR COMMERCIAL AGENCY, Shop No.1 • **Main Road,** DEO BROTHERS • **BHAGALPUR: D.N. Singh Road,** DOKANIA & SONS • LIGHT CENTRE • MELA STORES • **BOKARO STEEL CITY: Sector 4,** AMRAPALI, E 4, City Centre • BOMBAY VARIETY STORES, E 13, City Centre • **CHAIBASA: Sadar Bazar,** K.C. PAUL & BROS. • **DARBHANGA: Subhash Chowk,** BABA STEEL HOUSE • **DEHRI ON SONE: Cinema Road,** GIASSINA • SAHELI • **DEOGARH: Shyamganj Road,** BAIDYANATH ELECTRIC STORES • **GAYA: G.B. Road,** PAPPU TRADING CO., Goal Patthar • **JAMSHEDPUR: Sakchi Bazar,** BINDESHARI PRASAD ANANT PRASAD, Dalda Line • COOKER HOUSE, 25, Old Alu Line, Pan Market • NEEL KAMAL STEEL CENTRE, 24, Old Alu Line, Pan Market • **KATIHAR: Mangal Bazar,** BHOWMICK BROTHERS • **Shah Katra,** ROOP RANG, New Market Road • **KHAGARIA: Mill Road,** SHYAM ELECTRICALS • **MOTIHARI: Main Road,** DULHAN JEWELLERY & STEEL HOUSE • STEEL CORNER • **MUNGER: Chowk,** MAHENDRA ELECTRIC STORES • **Town Hall Road,** JALAN TRADERS • **MUZAFFARPUR: Saraiya Ganj,** BINJRAJKA STEEL HOUSE • **PATNA: Boring Road,** H.C. ENTERPRISES, Nepali Kothi • **Muradpur,** STEEL CORNER, Opposite Bankipur Post Office • **New Market,** SAWHNEY & ELECTRICALS • **PURNEA: Bhatta Bazar,** LAKHAN LAL & CO. • **RANCHI: Main Road,** KAILASH CROCKERY HOUSE • THE RANCHI MOTOR & CYCLE STORES, Near Bata Shop • UDAYAN • UJALA • UDAY AGENCIES, Khaganchi Market • **RAXAUL: Bank Road,** PAWAN GENERAL STORES • **SITAMARHI: Main Road,** SREE CHANDRIKA STORES • **SIWAN: Naya Bazar,** NEW ASHA STORES, Darbar Market.

CHANDIGARH

CHANDIGARH: Sector 15D, INDIAN CROCKERY HOUSE, Shop No. 45 • **Sector 17E,** JAGAT SINGH AND SONS, SGF 32.

GOA

MAPUSA: Opp. Municipality Market, MAYUR AGENCIES, 17 Ramchandra Bldg. • **MARGAO: New Market,** D.D. SADEKAR & SONS, Shop No. 10 • **Opp. Municipality,** T.D. PARODKAR • **Station Road,** T.A. HAYARE & SONS • **PANJIM: Opp. Azad Maidan,** S.T. POKLE & SONS • **PONDA: Ponda,** SHANTA ELECTRIC STORES • **VASCO: Dorado Building,** BARKAT ALI TRADERS.

GUJARAT

BAWDA: M.G. Road, M/S KANSARA BAPULAL RANCHODJI.

HARYANA

HISSAR: Moti Bazar, KEWAL KRISHAN INDER SAIN. • **JAGADHRI, Manohar Nagar,** O.P. METAL INDUSTRIES • **ROHTAK: Railway Road,** PARKASH CROCKERY HOUSE • **SIRSA: Rori Bazar,** AGGARWAL BARTAN BHANDAR.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

KULLU: Akhara Bazar, VIGSON GENERAL STORE.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

JAMMU: New Market, LADHUMALDES RAJ JAIN, Raghunath Bazar.

KARNATAKA

BANGALORE: Avenue Road, B.M. AGENCIES, 301 • **Brigade Road,** POTS & PANS, 11, Curzon Complex • **B.V.K. Iyengar Road,** MAHESH ELECTRICALS, 14/5 • **Chickpet,** RAJA TRADING CO., 802, Near Balepet Square • RASHMI STEELS, 340 • **Jayanagar,** SARATHY, 16, 9th Main, 3rd Block • **Shivaji Nagar,** ADAMS &, COMPANY, 19, Richards Square • **BELGAUM: Maruthi Galli,** REVANKAR ELECTRICALS, Ramprasad Buildings • **CHICKAMAGALUR: Ratnagiri Road,** MULTI ENTERPRISES, P.B. No. 8 • **HASSAN: Subhash Square,** NOVELTY HOUSE • **MYSORE: Ashoka Road,** ARUNODAY, 15/1 • **SHIMOGA, Nehru Road,** SADHANA TRADING CO. • **UDUPI: K.M. Marg,** HARSHA.

KERALA

ALLEPPEY: C.C.N.B. Road, GOOD MORNING AGENCIES • **Mullackal,** BHIMA STAINLESS STEEL & STEEL INDUSTRIES • **ALWAYE: Catholic Centre,** WIRELESS METRO • **CALICUT:** BRIGHT METALS, Muthalakulam • PANKAJ DISTRIBUTORS, S.M. Street • **CANNANORE:** STAINLESS STEEL CENTRE, Camp Bazar • GRIHALAKSHMI, S.N. Park Road • **ERNAKULAM: Broadway,** ANTHONY FRANCIS & SON • MAHMOOD CROCKERIES, Kerala Wakf Board Building • **Palarivattom Junction,** SANTHI VESSELS • **T.D. Road (North),** PRODUCTS & SERVICES • **IRINJALAKUDA: Big Bazar,** VELLANIKARAM AGENCIES, Vellanikaram Bldg. • **KODUGALLORE: Main Road,** KARUN STORES, South Nada • **KOTTARAKKARA, Main Road,** IDEAL AGENCIES, Ideal House • **KOTTAYAM: K.K. Road,** KEMS AGENCIES, M.D. Commerce Centre • **Pullmood Junction,** BHUVANA METAL MART • ST. ANTHONY'S • **MAHE:** KARMA ENTERPRISES, Main Road • **Opp. Church,** SREELEKH AGENCIES, Main Road • **MUVATTUPUZHA: New Bazaar,** MINI STORES • **PALGHAT:** STEEL PALACE, G.B. Road • **PATHANAMTHITTA: Private Bus Stand,** LEKHA TRADERS • **PERUMBAVOOR: A.M. Road,** PITTAPPILLIL AGENCIES, Near Vegetable Market • **QUILON: Main Road,** BROTHERS STEEL HOUSE, Sultania Building • **TELLICHERY: Narangapuram,** KRISHNA ELECTRONICS, A.V.K. Nair Road • **THODUPUZHA: Main Road,** MANNOOR BROTHERS • **Matha Shopping Complex,** ST. PETER'S AGENCIES, C/o Alappat Agencies • **TRICHUR: Post Office Road,** HANEEF TRADERS, Geo Building • STEELALAYAM, Opp. Head Post Office • **Round South,** KERALA LEATHER CO., Near Govt. Hospital • **TRIVANDRUM: Chalai Bazaar,** S. IBRAHIM & CO., Ibrahim Buildings

MADHYA PRADESH

AMBIKAPUR: Sadar Bazar, SONA ROOPA • **BETUL: Ganj,** BAL MUKUND GUPTA • **BHILAI: Camp No. 2,** GARGI GENERAL STORES, B-14, Circular Market • **CHHATARPUR: Mahal Road,** AGARSEN EMPORIUM • **DABRA: Kamala Market,** ADHUNIK KITCHENWARE • **DAMOH: Cinema Road,** AJANTA TRADERS • **GADARWARA: Jawahar Ganj,** MANGAL KALASH, Jhanda Chowk • **GWALIOR: Topi Bazar,** PAHOORAM PESURAM LOKWANI • **INDORE: Jawahar Marg,** COOKER HOUSE, Shop No. 370 • **Ram Laxman Bazar:** N.R. ELECTRONICS, Shop No. 23 • **KHANDWA: M.G. Road,** KHANDWA PLASTIC CENTRE, 462, Bombay Bazar • **MANENDRAGARH: Main Road,** SUPREME ELECTRICALS, Nagar Palika Bhawan • **RAIPUR: Malviya Road,** SURANA SALES • SURESH BROTHERS • **Sadar Bazar,** M.S. TRADERS • SHRI PATRA BHANDAR • **RAJNANDGAON: Juni Hatri,** CHHOTE SOUND SYSTEM • **RATLAM: Do Batti,** ROOPYAN STORES • **SEONI: Barapatthar,** VISHAL STEEL CENTRE.

MANIPUR

IMPHAL: Paona Bazar, PASA ENTERPRISES • **Thangal Bazar,** ROOPAK AGENCY • SUDARSHAN'S • **SINGJAMEI: Main Road,** NEW VARIETY.

MAHARASHTRA

AHMEDNAGAR: New Cloth Market, KASHINATH TRIMBAK RASANE, M.G. Road, Shop No. 2554 • **BOMBAY SOUTH: Dadar,** DHIRAJ SALES CORPORATION, 33, Pandaye Wadi, Bhavani Shankar Road • P.B. POONAMIYA & CO., M.C. Javale Marg • **Grant Road,** VARIETY GEN. STORES, 297.

Continued on next page

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HAWKINS MINIATURE COOKER DEALERS

Lamington Road • **CENTRAL SUBURBS: Chembur,** NATRAJ EMPORIUM, 4, Station Road • SILVER CENTRE, 3, Laxmi Market • **Dombivli,** MUKESH STEEL & NOVELTIES, Phadke Road, Damle Buildings • **Kalyan,** PRABHAT APPLIANCES, Bazar Peth, Opp. Vishnu Mandir • **Sion,** SRI MURUGAN STEEL HOUSE, 11/39, Maryland Corner • **Thane: Naupada,** MAHAVIR, Hem Shopping Centre, Gokhale Road • **Vashi: Sector 17,** MURUGAN ENTERPRISES, Shop No. 55, Near Big Splash • **WESTERN SUBURBS: Borivli,** OSWAL STEEL CENTRE, 18, Goyal Shopping Centre • PRAMANIK CENTRE, S.V. Road • **Vile Parle,** MANSUKH DISTRIBUTORS, 19(B) Agarwal Market • **KOLHAPUR: Gijari,** B.T. VANKUDRE • **NAGPUR: Itwari,** BANDEALI MOHOMADALI, Bhandara Road • **Sitabuldi,** MEGHNA METALS, Super Market • **NASIK: 848, Bhandi Bazar,** PRAKASH RAMDAS KALE • **Shivaji Road,** VIJAY TRADING CO., Shalimar Building • **Veer Savarkar Peth,** MANSUKHLAL NARANDAS • **PIMPRI: Near Arya Samaj,** RAJ KUMAR ENTERPRISE • **POONA: 39/24B Karve Road,** JAIN METALS, Opp. Bank of Maharashtra • **Raviwar Peth,** MEHTA BROTHERS, 206 Phoolwala Chowk • RAJENDRA & CO., 894 Daroowala Bridge • **SANGLI: Harbhat Road,** BHAGATI STEEL CENTRE, Near Abwadi High School • **Main Road,** SHREE AMEYA STEEL CENTRE, Karmarkar Building • **SATARA: Manish Market,** THOMBARE NOVELTIES • **SHOLAPUR: Navipeth,** STEEL CENTRE, 4A L.B. Shashtri Shopping Centre • SHOLAPUR STAINLESS STEEL HOUSE, 4 Paras Estate • **UMBRAJ: Main Road,** S.M. MOHIRE

MEGHALAYA

SHILLONG: Bawri Mansion, V.K. GHAI & CO., Dhankheti.

NEPAL

KATHMANDU: Thamel, MALU TRADING, 16/78

ORISSA

BARAGARH: Main Road, ASHOK ELECTRICALS • **BARBIL: Main Road,** BHAWANI VARIETIES • **BERHAMPUR: Bhapur Bazar,** SILLA GOPALAM & SONS • **Giri Market,** ALLIED STORES • **One-way Traffic Road,** J. K. ENTERPRISES • **Sana Bazar,** RAGHABENDRA & CO. • **BRAJRAJ NAGAR: Main Road,** MAHENDRA • **CUTTACK: Mahatab Road,** INDIAN INDUSTRIES • **Tinkonia Baghicha,** SUNITA • **JASHIPUR: Main Road,** JANATA AGENCIES • **JHARSUGUDA: Main Road,** JHARSUGUDA METAL STORE • **KEONJHAR: New Market,** PRIYA STORE • SRI DURGA AGENCIES • **MUNIGUDA: Main Road,** RAJESH BOOK STORE • **PHULBANI: Main Road,** ARJUN SENAPATI & SONS • **RAJGANGPUR: Main Road,** PRADEEP STORES • **ROURKELA-7: Fertiliser Township,** SRI BALDEVJI ENTERPRISES • **ROURKELA: Sec-5 Market,** PRESTIGE, Shop No. 1 • SELECTION CENTRE, Shop No. 16.

PUNJAB

AMRITSAR: Hall Bazar, RAGHBIR SINGH KATARIA & SONS • **Pratap Bazar,** PURI BATTERY STORE • **BHATINDA: Dhobi Bazar,** GOYAL BARTAN STORE • **Gandhi Market,** KANCHAN CROCKERY HOUSE • SUBHASH & CO. • **JALANDHAR: Bazar Sheikhan,** KHARBANDA SHOPPING CENTRE • **G.T. Road,** J. OM PRAKASH & SONS, Opp. Civil Hospital • **Naya Bazar,** BOMBAY STAINLESS STEEL (Regd.), Near Milap Chowk • **KOTKAPURA: Railway Road,** AHUJA GIFT HOUSE • **MOGA: Bagh Gali,** CROCKERY PALACE • **Main Bazar,** NANDKISHORE AGGARWAL & SONS • **PATHANKOT: Main Bazar,** SINGLA GIFT HOUSE • **PHAGWARA, Loha Mandi Road,** A.K. TRADERS, C/o Tilak Raj Darshan Kumar Mata

RAJASTHAN

ALWAR: Hope Circus, JANTA BARTAN BHANDAR, Shop No. 39 • **BHARATPUR: Neem Da Gate,** KISHORI SHYAM BRIJESH KUMAR • **JAIPUR: Nehru Bazar,** ASHOKA DEPARTMENTAL STORE, Near Mayur Cinema • **Raja Park,** LONGLIFE DEPARTMENTAL STORE, 372, Gali No. 1 • **KHETRI NAGAR: Subhash Market,** AMAR JYOTI FANCY STORE, Shop No. 48 • **SIKAR: Nehru Marg,** SIKAR BARTAN BHANDAR

TAMIL NADU

CHIDAMBARAM: SRI VINAYAGA PATHIRAKADAI, 25, South Car Street • **COIMBATORE: Lakshmi Complex,** COVAI STEELS, 48, Lakshmi Complex, Gandhipuram • **R.S. Puram,** IDEAL GIFT HOUSE, No. 8, East Rashyagaralu Road • **DINDIGUL: Big Bazar,** S.M.B. MANICKAM NADAR (FIRM), 163, 164 • **St. Mary's Shopping Complex,** S.M.B.M. TRADERS, 41, Matha Building, Main Road • **ERODE: Madhava Krishna Street,** UNIVERSAL TRADERS, 22 • **MADRAS: Adayar,** SELVA VINAYAGAR STORES, 73/1, L.B. Road • **Alwarpet,** SANTHOSA NADAR AGENCY, 17, Beemana Mudali Street • **Evening Bazar,** M.A. ETHIRAJULU NAIDU, 18 • P.L.D. RAJENDRAN BROS, 15/C • S. SANTHOSA NADAR SON (FIRM), 88, Naniappa Naicker Street • **Purasawakkam,** RAJA METAL STORE, 264 Purasawakkam High Road • **T. Nagar,** RATHNA METALS, 55, Ranganathan Street • RATHNA STORES (FIRM), 47-A, Pondy Bazar • SABHARI DISTRIBUTORS, No. 64, Rathna Complex, Ranganathan Street • SARAVANA STORES, 13, Ranganathan Street • SUNDAR STORES, 68, Usman Road • **MADURAI: Amman Sannathi,** S. SANTHOSA NADAR CORPN., No. 3 • **East Avani Moola St.,** IBRAHIM & CO., 90-92 • **East Veli Street,** ALLWINRAJ METAL CENTRE, 180-181 • **Kamarajar Salai,** S. CHELLIAH NADAR & SONS, 267 • **Netaji Road,** NEW MUTHUSELVI CORPN., 109 • **South Avani Moola St.,** ANANTHA STORES, 42 • **MARTHANDAM, North St.,** THAI SUBBIAN METALS, 32-98 • **NAGERCOIL: Court Road,** PONNIAH ENTERPRISES, 117 • **PATTUKOTTAI:** SRI RAAMU FURNITURE, 19, Thalaiyari Street • **SALEM: Bazaar Street,** NATIONAL AGENCIES, 348 • V. CHANDRASEKARAM & CO., 361 • V. CHANDRASEKARAM & SONS, 357 • **Big Bazar Street,** V.C.R. METAL COMPANY, 87 • **SIVAKASI: South Car St.,** M.V.K.D. THANGAVELU NADAR, 8 • **THENI: Subban Chetty Street,** GIRI TRADERS, 299 • **TIRUNELVELI:** S. SANTHOSA NADAR & SONS, 37, High Road • **TIRUPUR: Easwaran Koil Street,** KAVITHA AGENCY, 45 • **TRICHY: Doublemal Street,** SRI MANGAL ENTERPRISES, 19 • PREMAH EVERSILVER PALACE, 411, N.S.B. Road • **VELLORE: Arcot Road,** SEENU AGENCIES, No. 80 • **Main Market,** BRIGHT STEEL HOUSE, G-31 • **VIRUDHUNAGAR, Katchery Road,** GEMINI AGENCIES, 203.

UTTAR PRADESH

AGRA: Johari Bazar, DADA GLASS AND CROCKERIES • **ALIGARH: Railway Road,** GUJATI STORES, New Market • JAI BHARAT CROCKERY HOUSE • **ALLAHABAD: Chowk,** GUR PRASAD HIRA LAL • **Katra,** JAIN TRADING CO., 1143, Katra Crossing • **Near Power House,** NOVELTY HOUSE, 6C, Kamla Nehru Marg • THE SAIR COMPANY • **Vivekananda Marg,** DIAMOND TEA SALES, Opposite Chameli Dharamshala • **BALLIA: Station Malgodown Road,** VIJAY GUN HOUSE • **BAHRAICH: Chowk Bazar,** SHYAM LAL AND SONS • **BAREILLY: Nainital Road,** DUA BROTHERS • **BULANDSHAHR: Ansari Road,** KANSAL CROCKERY STORE • **DEORIA: Moti Lal Road,** OM STORES • **DEHRADUN: Paltan Bazar,** SUSHIL & COMPANY, Shop No. 95 • VED PRAKASH GOEL, Shop No. 120 • **FAIZABAD: Chowk,** KARIM KHAN • **GONDA: Utraula Road,** PARAS STEEL EMPORIUM, Raja Raghuran Market • **GORAKHPUR: Cinema Road,** GANESHI LAL & SONS • **Golghar,** FINE CROCKERY HOUSE, 16, Water Works Building • GANESHI LAL RAM NIWAS AGENCIES, Station Road • MODERN CROCKERY MUSEUM, 18, Water Works Building • **Town Hall,** VIJAY AGENCIES, Shop No. 16-17 • **HALDWANI: Bareilly Road,** SARDAR CROCKERY HOUSE, Near Sindhi Sweets • **Karkhana Bazar,** BOMBAY CROCKERY HOUSE • **HAPUR: Railway Road,** CROCKERY CENTRE, Gandhi Bhawan • **HARDWAR: Moti Bazar,** OM PRAKASH CHELA RAM • **JAUNPUR: Harlalka Road,** GLASS STORE • **JWALAPUR: Main Bazar,** NEW VIMAL METALS • **KANPUR: Birhana Road,** M.K. TRADERS (Bartan Wale), 58/45 • **Gumti No. 5,** ISH ELECTRICALS, 118/2, Kaushal Puri, Opp. Jaihind Cinema • LAXMI STEEL HOUSE, 118/164, Kaushal Puri • **Harsh Nagar,** M.K. AGENCIES, Shop No. 111/2, 1st Floor, Opp. Bank of India • **Navin Market,** KUMAR FANCY STORES, Shop No. 114 • **LUCKNOW: Aminabad,** RAM SARAN & COMPANY • **Nazirabad,** CHAMAN LAL AGGARWAL AND SONS, C/o Kanhaiya Lal Parag Das • **Yahiyaganj,** KANHAIYA LAL PRAG DAS, Pili Kothi • **MEERUT: Pan Dariba,** MODERN LIGHT HOUSE, 222, Khair Nagar Bazar • **MIRZAPUR: Waseliey Ganj,** KRISHNA ELECTRICAL AGENCY, Sardar Bhagat Singh Marg • **MORADABAD: Bazarganj,** CROCKERY EMPORIUM, Opposite Kotwali • **Chowmukhapul,** PREM CROCKERIES, Amroha Gate • **MUZAFFARNAGAR: Court Road,** GOEL AGENCIES • **NAJIBABAD: Bazar Chowk,** KWALITY EMPORIUM • **RENUKOOT:** SUPER BAZAR HINDALCO • **RISHI KESH: Chettar Road,** MOTI RAM RAMAKANT • **ROORKEE, Civil Lines,** MORADABAD HOUSE • **RUPAIDIHA:** RAMDOOT STORES • **SAHARANPUR: Nehru Market,** NIHAL CHAND HARBANSLAL, Shop No. 14 • **SAKTINAGAR: Vidyut Vihar,** JYOTI STORES, Shop No. 6, Shopping Centre • **SULTANPUR: Shah Ganj Chowk,** S.R. STEEL EMPORIUM, Lala Suraj Lal Market • **VARANASI: Bans Phatak,** GIRDHAR DAS AND SONS • **Lahurabir,** U.P. GLASS STORES, Shop No. C26/10B, Opp. SBI • **Nichi Bagh,** RASOI GHAR, Near Bata Shoe Co.

WEST BENGAL

ALIPURDUAR: New Town, BASANTI ELECTRIC STORES • **AMTOLA: Kannya Nagar,** PROVASH CH. SAHA • **ARAMBAG: Near Girls School,** NEW RAMKRISHNA BASANALAYA • **ASANSOL: Near Old Bus Stand,** EAGLE GLASS HOUSE, G.T. Road • **BAKURA: Nutan Ganj,** POPULAR FURNITURE SYNDICATE, Dr. S.P. Mukherjee Road • **BALLY: Bally Bazar,** ANNAPURNA STORES, 4/1 Iswar Dey Lane • **BALURGHAT: Lenin Sarani,** SRI KRISHANA STORES • **BARASAT: Capital Market,** NEW SANSAR • **BERHAMPUR:** AAJKAL, 53 Bon Behari Sen Road • **BHADRAKALI:** QUALITY STORES, 69, B.F.B. Sarani • **BHADRESWAR: Bhadreswar Bazar,** SONALI, 65, G.T. Road • **BOINCHI: Boinchi Rail Gate,** SONARTARI • **BURDWAN: Near Thana,** PRAYOJANI, 497, B.C. Road • SILPA SADAN, 25, B.C. Road • **Tetul Tala,** WEST BENGAL STORES, B.B. Ghosh Road • **CALCUTTA: Alam Bazar,** VENU'S, 2, Kalikrishna Tagore Road • **Bagree Market,** UNITED STATIONERS, C-21 • VINOD & CO., D-5 Bagree Market • **Baguiati Durga Bari,** MANIMALA, AA/12 Baguiati Road • M.G. ELECTRONICS, Baguiati Bazar • **Bara Bazar,** MOHANLAL MADHAWJEE, 59, Cotton Street • **Behala,** NEW BEHALA STEEL HOUSE, 400/1, D.H. Road • **Beliaghata,** SANSAR, 123 Hemchandra Naskar Road • **Bhowanipore,** AMITA STORES, 144A, A. Mukherjee Road • PORCELAIN STORES, 2B, S.P. Mukherjee Road • **Birati,** PRIYABRATA AGENCY, Backside of Rly. Quarters • **Chandni Chowk,** CROCKERY CENTRE, 41B • NAG & SON, 6 Chandni Chowk St. • **College Street Market,** DUTTA BROTHERS, 41/42, College Street • **Deshapriya Park,** NEPAL SHANKAR & CO., 85, Rash Behari Avenue • **Garia,** UNITED SALES EMPORIUM, P45 Raja, S.C. Mullick Road • **Golpark,** T.R. ELECTRIC CO., 23/37, Gariahat Road • **Hatibagan,** ASHOK TRADING CORPN., 83/2E Bidhan Sarani • MODERN MUSEUM, 137, Bidhan Sarani • **Hazra Road,** SHYAM TRADERS, 62/1A • **Hedua,** AVANTIKA ELECTRONIC, 173/3 Bidhan Sarani • **Italgacha,** ANANDA TRADERS, (Inside Airport Gate), 22 Tarunsen Gupta Sarani • **Lake Market,** LAKE BASAN STORES, 104, Rash Behari Avenue • SREE DURGA STORES, D-5, 104 R.B. Avenue • **Nager Bazar,** SUJATA ENTERPRISES, 6, A.M. Bose Road (Near Satgachi More) • **Old China Bazar,** AMARNATH KUNDU BROS., 14-3 • LAMP HOUSE PVT. LTD., 23, Canning Street • PARAGON TRADE CENTRE, 17 • S.L. CONDOO & CO., Shop No. 206 • SATCOWRIE DASS & CO., 196 • **Posta,** NANDY STORES, 50 Kalikrishna Tagore Street • NIRMAL CHANDRA NANDY, 50 Kalikrishna Tagore Street • **Sealdah,** LAXMINARAYAN BASANALAYA, 153/H, A.J.C. Bose Road, (Ground-Floor of Ashoka Hotel) • RUBY CYCLE STORES, 11 M.G. Road, (Opp. Chabi Ghar Cinema) • SITALA AGENCY, 9A, M.G. Road (Opp. Chabi Ghar Cinema) • TARAKNATH STORES, 151A, B.B. Ganguly Street (Near Kolay Market) • **Sham Bazar,** SANGEETA ENTERPRISES, 123, Bidhan Sarani • **Tobin Road,** MULLIKA ELECTRONICS, 83/2, B.T. Road • **CHAKDAH: Bus Stand,** BASAN BIPANI, Bonogram Road • **Opp. Post Office,** STEEL VARIETY, N.S. Road • **CHANDANNAGAR: Laxmiganj Bazar,** WESTERN TRADING CO. • **CHINSURA: Kharua Bazar,** MAHADEB KUNDU & CO., N.S. Road • **CHITTARANJA: Amladahi Market,** MODERN STEEL FURNITURE (UNIVERSAL), Shop No. A-1/R-3 • **CONTAI: Main Road,** SABITRI BHANDAR • **DHANIAKHALI: Dhaniakhali Bazar,** KOHINOOR STEEL FURNITURE • **DIAMOND HARBOUR: Near Uco Bank,** BATOKRISHNA PAUL & BROS. • **DINHATA: Chowrahat,** BADDYANATH SAHA & BROS. • **DURGACHAWK: Colony Market,** PRATIK • **DURGAPUR: Benachitty,** DIPTY • **Chandidas Market,** PRINCE • **Station Bazar,** RAKAMARI, Station Road • RUJ BROTHERS, C/O ASIT KUMAR RUJ, Hat Tala Road • **FARAKKA: Shop No.6-19,** MODERN TRADING AGENCY, Chittaranjan Market • **GHATAL: Kuthi Bazar,** TAIJASPATRA • **HABRA: Jessore Road,** MAKALI BHANDAR • **HOWRAH: Opposite Bangabasi Cinema,** HOWRAH ELECTRONICS, 4, Chintamoni Dey Road • **Kalibabur Bazar,** ELECTROSOUND, 324, N.S. Road • **Shibpur Bazar,** SREE GURU BASANALAYA, 34-2, Shibpur Road • **JIAGANJ: Churipatty,** JOGAMAYA STORES, (Opp. Laxmi Cinema) • **KANCHRAPARA: Workshop Road,** BANGALAXMI BASANALAYA • **KHARAGPUR: D.V.C. Market,** KUSUM STEEL EMPORIUM, Talbagicha • **Gole Bazar,** ARVIND STORES, 87, Railway Market • **KIRNAHAR: Kirnahar Bazar,** BICHITRA STORES • **MALDA: D.C.R. Market,** SREE BISWANATH STORES, 3/62 • **Near Old Bata,** RADIO SIGN, Netaji Subhash Road • **MIDNAPUR: Bara Bazar,** TRUNK HOUSE • **Bibiganj,** CHABRI ENTERPRISE, Near Rana Garage • **School Bazar,** DAS ELECTRONICS • **PURULIA: Near Telegraph Office,** MONIKA, Chai Basa Road • **RAGHUNATHGANJ: Bazarpara,** PRABHAT STORES (DULU'S DUKAN) • **Sadar Ghat,** SUKANTA, Municipal Super Market • **SERAMPUR: Battala,** BEST, 79, G.T. Road • **Opposite Manasi Cinema,** FAST END TRADERS, 39, N.S. Avenue • **SHEAKHALA: Sheakhala Bazar,** SHEAKHALA BASANALAYA • **SILIGURI: Alupatty,** NEELAM, Metal Market • **Bidhan Market,** GRIHASREE • NADIA STORES, B-3(R) • STAINLESS HOUSE, A/93 • **Hill Cart Road,** MAHESHWARI METAL STORES • **SIMURALI:** KUNDU BASANALAYA • **BODEPUR: Bidyasagar Corner,** PROYOJANI, Station Road • **SONAMUKHI: Rath Tala,** PAUL'S FURNITURE • **TAMLUK: Town Padumbasan,** TAMRALIPTA ALLUMINIUM STORES, Near Panskura Bus Stand • **TARAKESHWAR: BPR Gate,** SUPER SONIC RADIO • **ULUBERIA: Near Hemanta Basu Market,** RAKSHIT STEEL STORES, Uluberia Bazar • **UTTARPARA: Uttarpara Bazar,** TAPASI, 219, G.T. Road

HC/1121/IT

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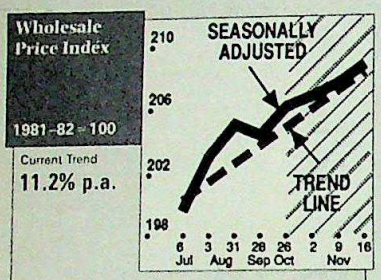
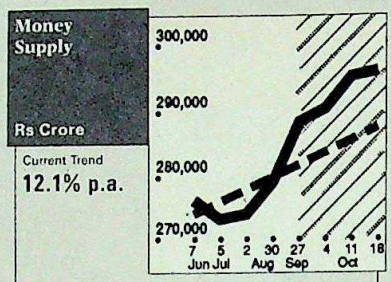
The overall picture is dismal. Stagflation is a reality with increasing inflation and decreasing industrial growth. Industrial stagnation, apart from impeding economic growth, will also result in lower revenue from excise, which in turn will lead to greater government deficit—and more inflation.

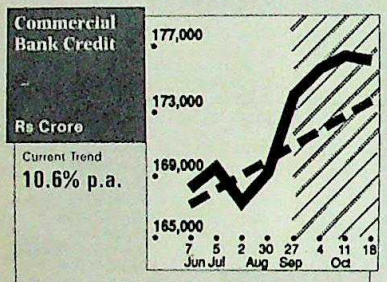
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



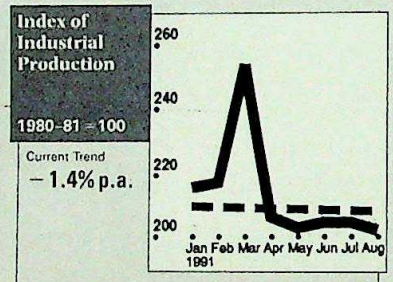
Prices continued to rise—by the end of the year, the inflation rate could be as high as 17 per cent.



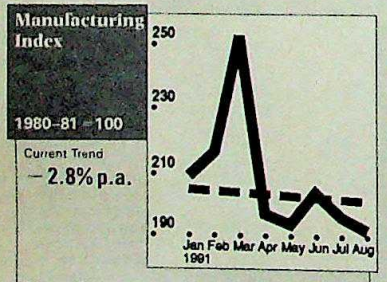
Money supply expanded—while that is bad for inflation control, the industry, for its part, didn't pick up on it.



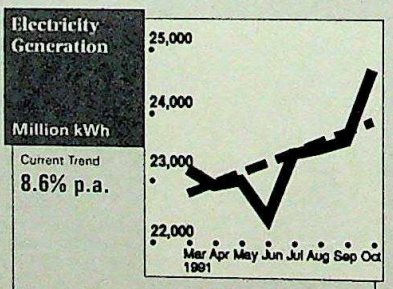
Commercial bank credit was stable—though it has dropped a little from October second week levels.



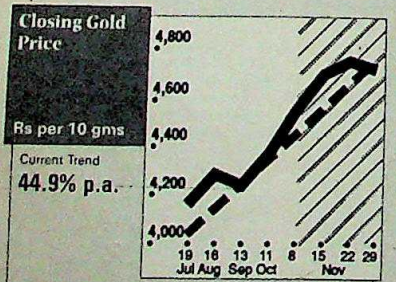
Industrial production fell again and growth is at minus 1.4 per cent—the GDP growth seems out of reach.



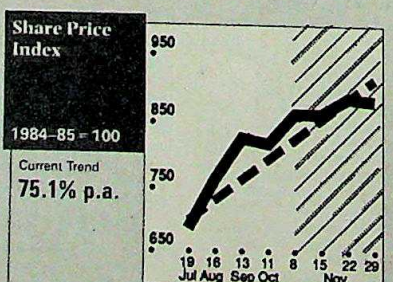
Manufacturing output fell—as of August, the economic package was not having the desired effect.



Electricity generation increased—however, the constraints on industry are much more than lack of infrastructure.



Gold prices were stable last fortnight—rising havala rates and overseas prices have squeezed smuggling profits.



Share markets continued to boom over the fortnight, despite all expectations of a stabilising force taking over.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of November 1991

	% Growth
Betel-Nuts	13.87
Bananas	7.44
Gur	7.03
Solvent Extracted Oil	6.30
Bajra	6.22
Groundnut Seeds	6.05
Cashew-Nut	5.95
Diesel Engines	5.11
Groundnut Oil	4.94
Milk	4.75
Urad	3.79
Jowar	3.78
Rice	3.56
Ghee	3.35
Cotton Raw	3.33
Cotton Seeds	3.31
Groundnut Oilcake	3.27
Electrical Motors	3.08
Vanaspati	2.75
Fish	2.62
Maize	2.47
Cars	2.41
Handloom & Powerloom Products	2.25
Gingelly Seed	2.16
Art Silk & Artifical Fabrics	1.97
Oranges	1.90
Dairy Products	1.90
Machine Tools	1.66
Chillies	1.53
Coconut Oil	1.49
Logs Timber Bamboo	1.42
Silk Raw	1.40
Rubber	1.28
Cycles	1.22
Linseed Oil	1.14
Coal	1.11
Synthetic Fibres	1.10
Cotton Cloth	1.06
Polythene Moulding Powder	1.05
Tobacco Raw	1.02
Board	1.02
Cigarettes	0.89
Furnace Oil	0.84
Silk & Artificial Fabrics	0.84
Skelp	0.82
Ragi	0.82
PVC Compounds	0.79

Of the 134 series considered, 87 of them with a total weight of 61.562 had a positive rate of growth and 47 of them with a total weight of 23.29 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1991	1990
Petroleum Crude Thousand Tonnes, October	2581	2548
Petroleum Refinery Production Thousand Tonnes, October	4206	3781
Letters of Intent Numbers, October	694	800
Industrial Licences Numbers, October	199	269
Foreign Currency Rs Crore, October	5200.61	3969.74

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Between leather and tile, unfortunately, there is always some sand.

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When people talk about scratch-resistant floors, fail to mention one minor detail. And that is, resis- to what?

Because the one thing most floors cannot resist is one thing every floor has to live with constantly: mon, everyday sand.

With a hardness measuring 7 on the Moh scale, has the kind of scratching power that no ordinary can take.

Not granite. Not marble. And certainly not entional ceramic tiles.

In fact, the only tile which can take it, day after year after year, without the smallest scratch is a fully ed floor tile. A tile manufactured at such tremendous ures and temperatures that the entire tile becomes omogenous, rock-like mass. (The principle involved is, in fact, the same one that helps transform coal iamond, the hardest substance known to man).

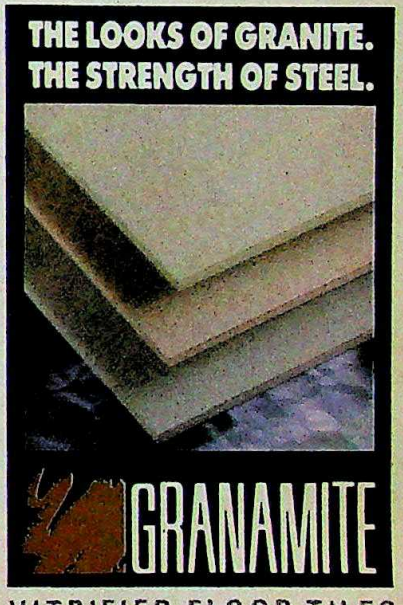
Granamite is India's first and only fully vitrified floor anufactured in collaboration with Mori Spa of Italy, orld leaders in vitrified tile technology. And apart eing close to diamond in hardness, it is also twice rong as granite, with one and half times the t resistance.

Aside from all of which, Granamite comes to you tunning range of colours and designs, in smooth, polished or textured finishes.

So if you are looking at floors in the near future, years beyond conventional ceramic, marble or e floors.

And take a good, hard look at Granamite.

It's the one tile that will stay untouched by the s of time.



Ceramics Ltd. 6-3-655/12, 2nd Floor, Civil Supplies Bhavan Lane, Somajiguda, Hyderabad 500 482. Ph: 210681, 210839. Fax: 0842-234723. Grams: RESTILE. Telex: 0425-6444.

Ahmedabad: Plus Marketing, Ph: 76195, 411883. ▸ **Bangalore:** P.C. Sampath and Co., Ph: 223392, 235904. P.C. Mallappa and Co., Ph: 561881, 577789. Moosa and Co. Floors, Ph: 222496, 226354. ▸ **Baroda:** Ambalal and 557547, 67073. ▸ **Belgaum:** Demat Enterprises, Ph: 24442, 23335. ▸ **Bombay:** A.B.C. and Co., (Saptagiri), Ph: 2626666, 2626677. Venubhai Chandulal Co., Ph: 320335, 336337. C. Bhogilal and Co., Ph: 2860690, ▸ **Calcutta:** Malvin Multinationals Inc., Ph: 220416, 227964. ▸ **Calicut:** Parmar Enterprises, Ph: 75554, 75808. ▸ **Cochin:** A 2 Z Tiles and Floorings, Ph: 366930, 353705. ▸ **Coimbatore:** Electro Diesel Pvt Ltd., 44389. ▸ **Hyderabad:** Premier Agencies, Ph: 202037, Uday Engineering Co., Ph: 233378. ▸ **Madras:** Padma Enterprises, Ph: 458238. Vaigai Sanitation Pvt Ltd., Ph: 74820, 76494. V. Govindaraja Mudaliar Sons Firm, 510, 510399. ▸ **New Delhi:** National Building Products, Ph: 6434227. D.P. Gupta and Co. Pvt. Ltd., Ph: 734747, 6835809. Ashok Kumar Garg and Bros., Ph: 6416085, 6411870. ▸ **Panaji:** V.C.R. Marketing Co., 3713. ▸ **Pune:** Patel Traders, Ph: 653939, 650228. ▸ **Secunderabad:** Materials Marketing Co., Ph: 77122, 821511. ▸ **Surat:** Intercermic, Ph: 30079, 85383.

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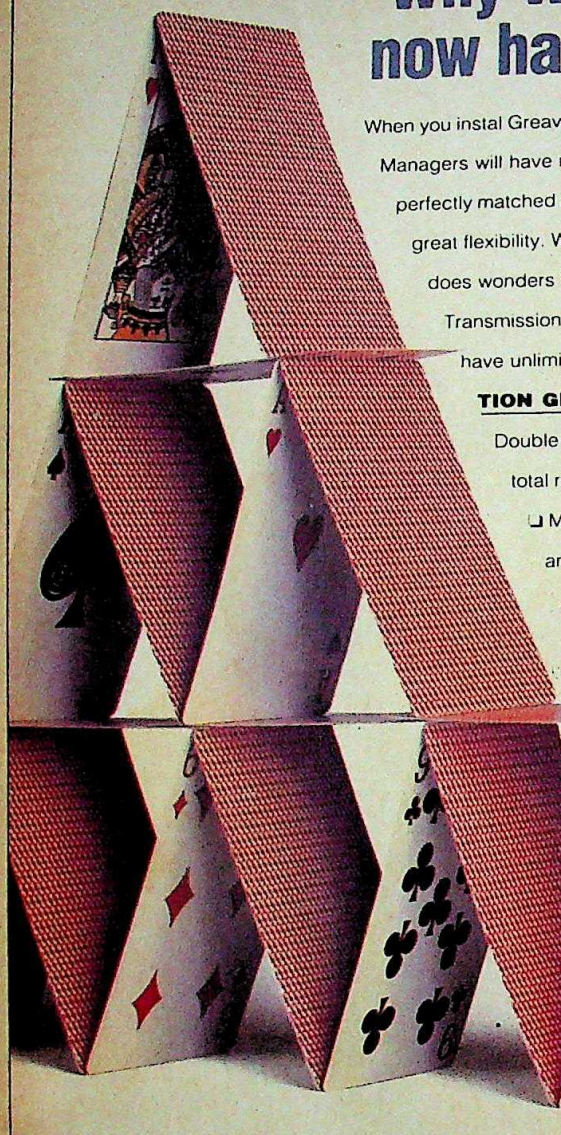
Why Works Managers now have time to spare



When you instal Greaves Power Transmission Systems on your factory floor, your Works Managers will have more spare time. Because all the components of the system are perfectly matched and ruggedly constructed to ensure uninterrupted operation and great flexibility. While this gives your managers time to sharpen their card skills, it does wonders for overall efficiency, productivity and economy. Greaves Power Transmission Systems are custom-built to suit your specific requirements and have unlimited applications. ▶ **GREAVES RADICON WORM REDUCTION GEARBOXES** ❑ Available in 15 sizes ❑ Horizontal, Vertical & Double reduction types ❑ Speed ratios - 5:1 - 4900:1 ❑ Built rugged for total reliability. ▶ **GREAVES HELICAL H-SERIES GEARBOXES** ❑ Made to strict international standards ❑ High efficiency, economy and versatility ❑ Wider range. ▶ **PEMBRIL FLUID COUPLINGS** ❑ Critical precision ❑ Unlimited applications ❑ Solid advantages–smooth, shock-free acceleration ❑ Low starting current ❑ Damping of vibration & shocks in the fluid medium ❑ Total protection to motor and machine in the case of seizure ❑ Available for constant fill type; variable speed and clutching applications ❑ Highly energy efficient ❑ Also available–Geared and Flexible Couplings for various applications. ▶ **DYNODRIVE VARIABLE SPEED DRIVES** ❑ High-precision control ❑ Unique features ❑ Unmatched international quality ❑ Great economy and versatility.

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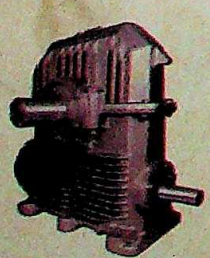
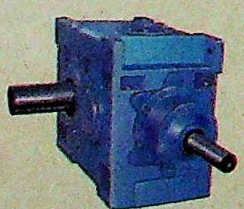
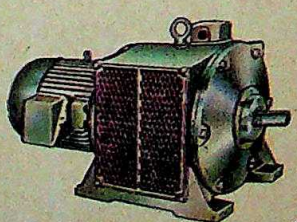


GREAVES RADICON WORM GEARS



GREAVES HELICAL GEARS

PEMBRIL FLUID COUPLINGS



DYNODRIVE VARIABLE SPEED MOTORS

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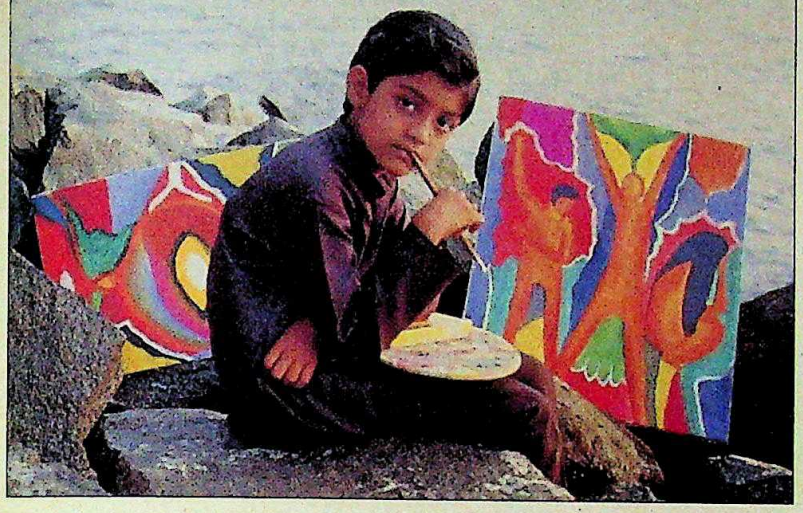
NITIN K. DAVID

Stroke of Genius

Child prodigy holds exhibition in the Gulf



Nitin painting on the beach

THE gesture is unique. When artist Nitin K. David left for a two-month exhibition tour of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last fortnight, it was thanks to two years of tireless effort by Dubai-based Malayalee businessman R. Shivkumar. His show—which includes demonstrations in schools—is being funded by the UAE Government. Shivkumar himself has paid the artist's air fare.

However, Nitin is no run-of-the-mill painter latching on to a junket. He's a nine-year-old whose brush with art, amazingly, began when he was just two. He already has an incredible oeuvre of 25,000 works, including 1,000 water colours and 13 oils. And the wunderkind from Quilon in Kerala is still painting away furiously.

Nitin has been on a roll since his debut at the age of five when 40 of his works were first exhibited in Trichur. With 35 exhibitions behind him, the little master's now studying the works of Michelangelo and Van Gogh.

The child prodigy's talent first came to the fore when his parents Vijaya and Xavier David noticed him do some amazing drawings with pebbles and shells on the beach. When they handed him paper and pencil, the boy cranked out as many as 100 drawings in six hours. Says Xavier: "Sometimes his brush moves faster than music."

The subjects of his earliest drawings were animals and birds. Over the last two years he's graduated to pieces inspired by his reading of Hindu and Greek mythology, and the works of some of Kerala's leading poets like O.N.V. Kurup. His *Ocean of Tears* was inspired by a melancholic film song. Another masterpiece by him is *Kannagi*—a painting of the legendary Tamil figure which he made merely by reading a description of her. Explains he: "Art is spontaneous." That's why he's refused to sell any of his works despite tempting offers.

Other accolades haven't been far behind. Says art critic K.P. Appan: "I find human emotions portrayed in his works of gods and goddesses." Early this year, Y.A. Rahim, a Kerala cartoonist, brought out a collection of his best works titled *Nitin's Album*. Says Rahim: "Not many artists can execute strokes with such expertise."

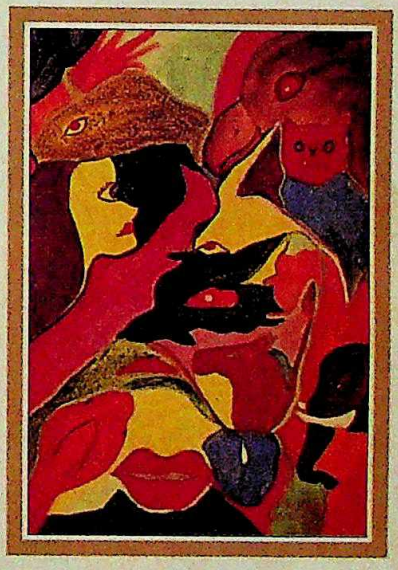
Yet Nitin is like any other child around. Says V.K. Joseph, the principal of St Antony's Central School where he studies: "He's just like the other kids in school—full of mischief. It's only when you see his work that the hidden talent surfaces. We're proud of him."

He isn't the only one. Boasts Shivkumar: "This boy is every Malayalee's pride." Yet every Malayalee's pride lives in a small house in Quilon's Vady beach area. And his teacher-parents have a monthly income of a little over Rs 4,000. Barely enough to sustain the creative needs of the little genius.

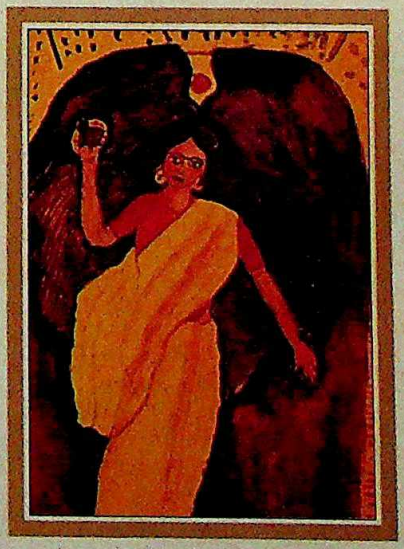
—ANAND VISWANATHAN

Photographs by SHANKAR

SEA BIRDS



MAN'S MIND



KANNAGI

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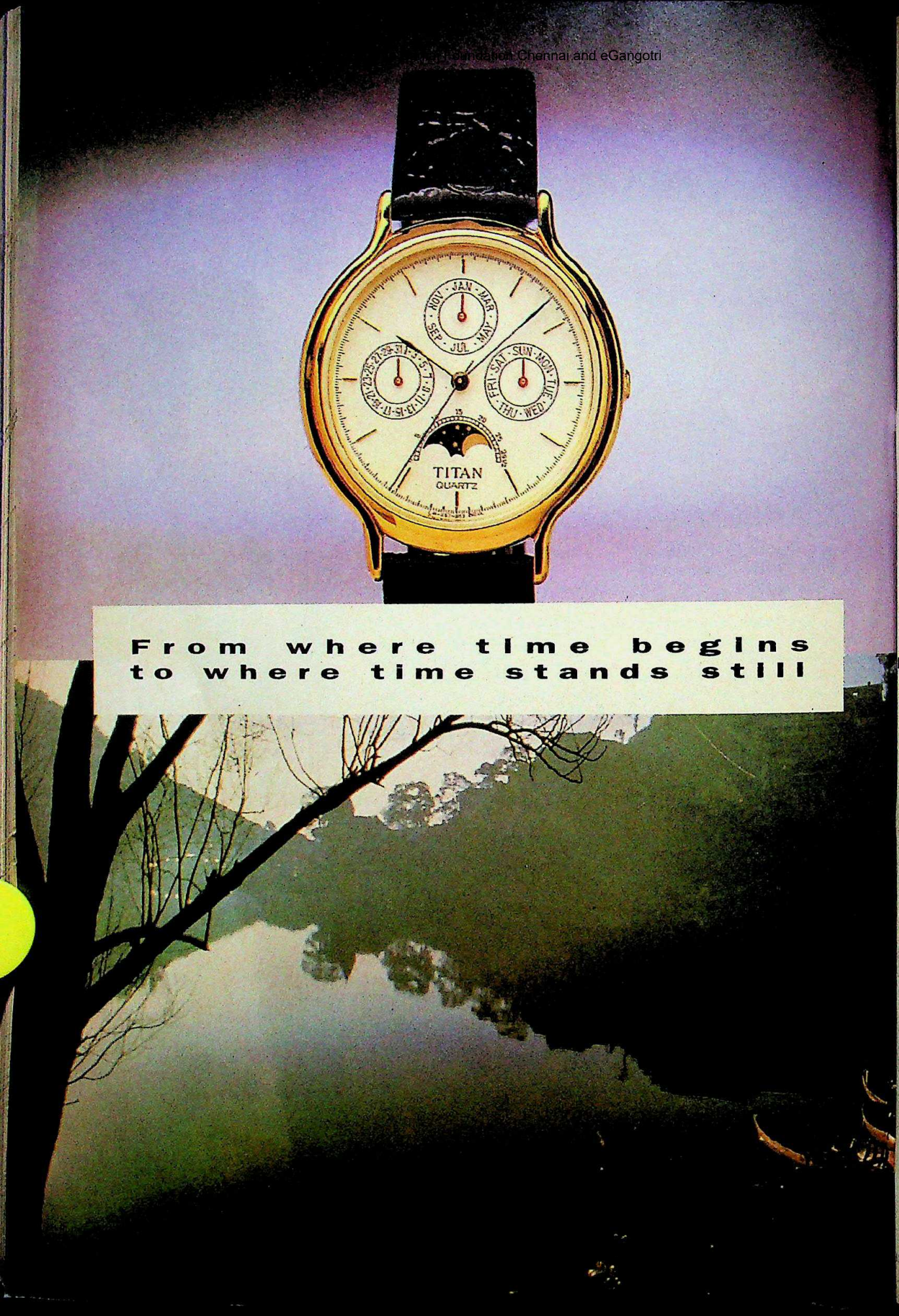

From where time begins
to where time stands still

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there are new members joining

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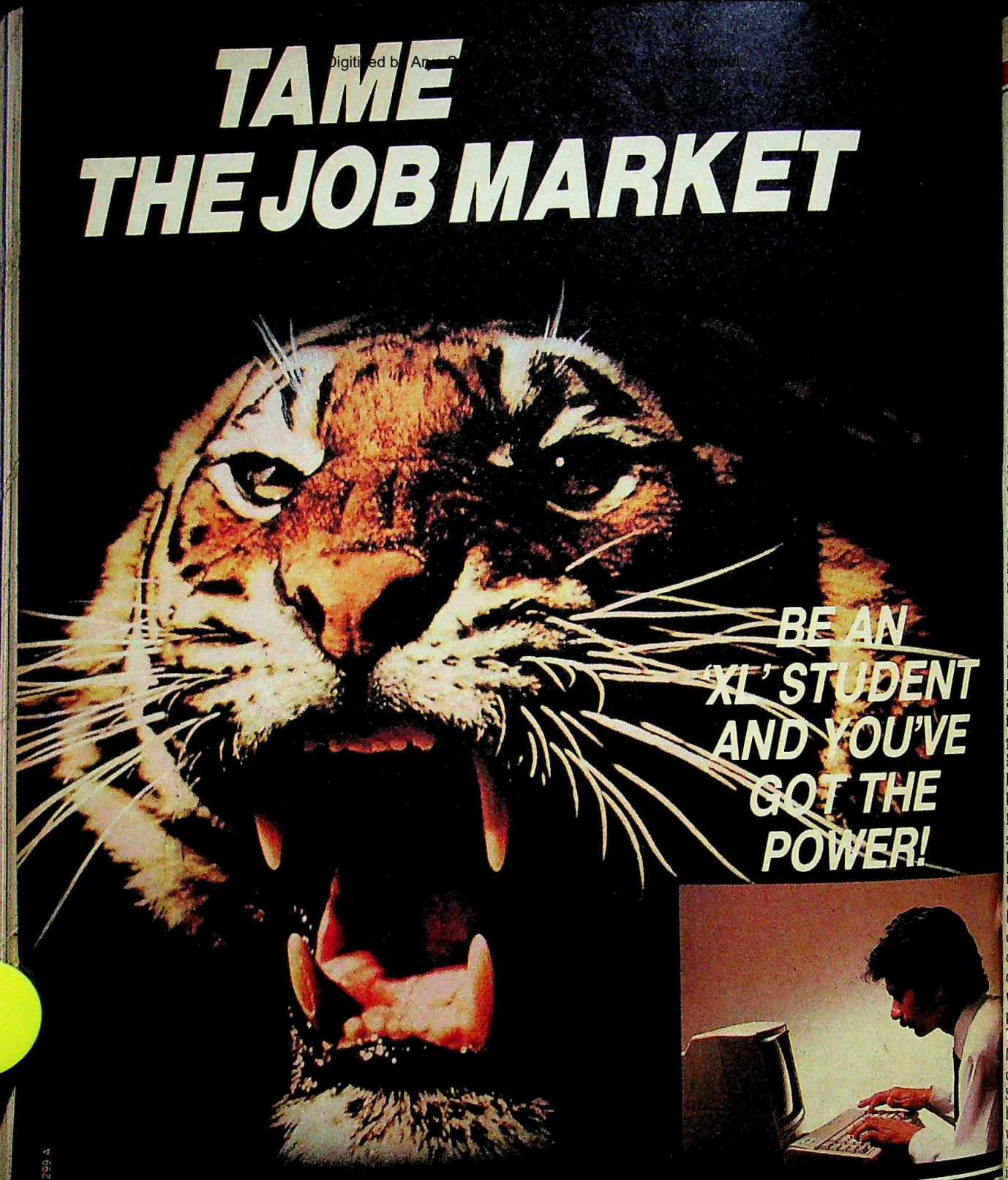

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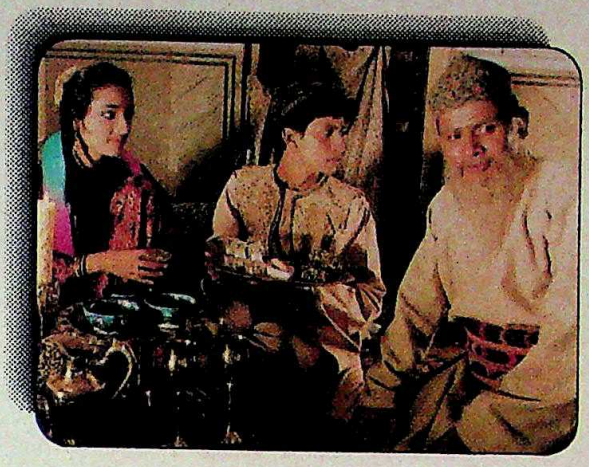
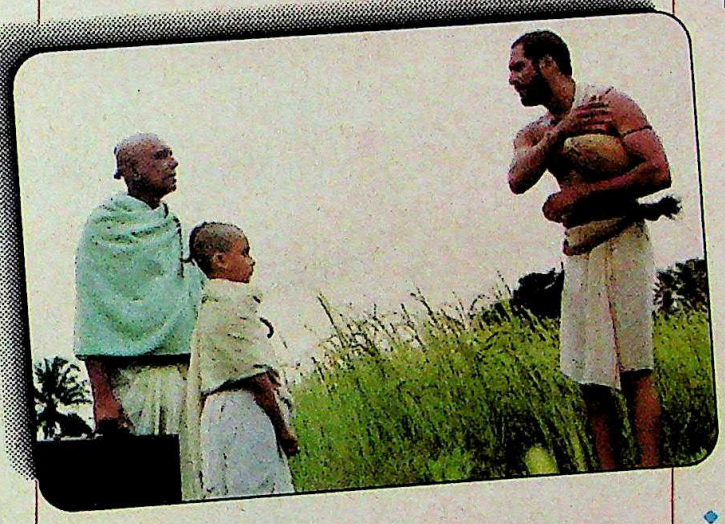
◆ Ironically, while more and more of the nation switches to satellite, the histrionics on the small screen are getting better. Raghuvir Yadav's Mulla Nasruddin—impish and sage in the same breath—in the TV series of the same name is stealing hearts. The little man is a giant of an actor. Likewise, Kavita Choudhary, of *Udaan* fame, has proved to be the dark horse among the plethora of programmes—her *Udaan II* is just behind the Hindi feature film in a recent IMRB survey. And Satish Shah as officer on special duty has viewers enthralled in *Yeh Duniya Ghazab Ki*—the humorous digs at government are great stuff.



▲ Yadav in *Mulla Nasruddin*: versatile histrionics

◆ Talking about acting, Nana Patekar has once again proved his range and acting prowess, filling in adeptly the groove that Naseeruddin Shah has left vacant for the time being. In *Diksha*, Arun Kaul's new film screened on television last fortnight, Patekar is the humble, self-effacing and soft-hearted *shudra* whose compassion allows him the courage to reject the tyranny of the Brahminical system which turns so harshly on a pregnant Brahmin widow. The thespian steals the scene from right under the noses of stalwarts like Manohar Singh and K.K. Raina with his brilliant portrayal in which a bewildered innocence gets transformed into a nascent inner rage. The cry from the heart is not just about religion gone arthritic, it's a lament for what happens to any society when tolerance is exiled.



▲ Patekar in *Diksha*: stealing the show

◆ The DD men behind the current affairs programmes should watch out. They are now being shown up—and that too on their own turf. Last month, Star TV beamed down a talk show called *On the Other Hand* on communalism, done initially for Channel 4, London. Anchored by Shekhar Kapur, it had K.R. Malkani from the BJP, Madhu Kishwar of *Manushi* and lawyer Rani Jethmalani—all flown to London especially for it. It was a volatile discussion with a live audience during the course of which Malkani really got grilled. Earlier, Indians tuning into Star TV found an equally heated discussion on arranged marriages. Kapur is thrilled with the feedback. "Earlier, it was all coming from London, now it's from India." Kapur doesn't just throw open the discussion, he throws down the gauntlet: he says he will bring the skeletons out of the closet. And often, this leads to moments of TV drama. "Asians are melodramatic. Often someone in the audience walk off in protest or get emotional."

▲ Kapur in *On the Other Hand*: showing up DD

◆ More on those *bandgalas* for Hindi news-readers on DD. Some of them are still grumbling about this new millstone for which they've had to fork out extra money. Moreover, there is an identity crisis at hand. "We are not bandwallahs," complained one, who felt particularly lost. Recently, news-reader Shammi Narang bravely substituted a tie and shirt, like his English newsreading brethren, for the ubiquitous *bandgala*. But DD is obviously being strict about its dress code: up came a notice on the board from the additional director-general, news, ticking off the news-reader and repeating the call for *bandgalas*. —MADHU JAIN

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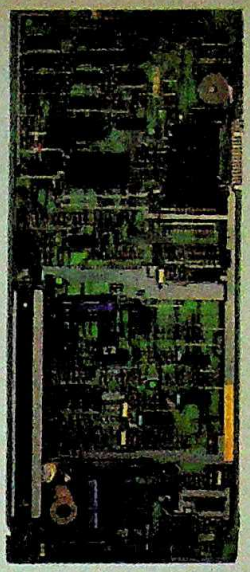

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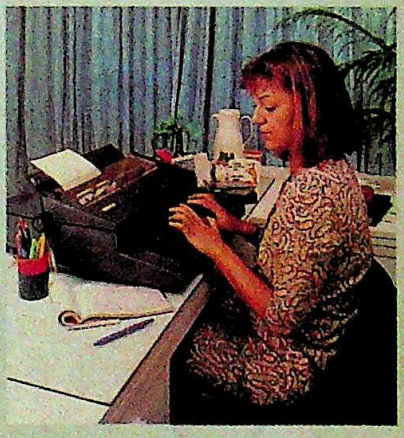

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BY GENERAL (RETD) K. SUNDARJI

Stretching Defence Bucks

IN real terms, the defence budget has been going down over the past few years. The apparent increases in terms of the current rupee have not even covered the loss of real value due to inflation. I do not see any dramatic change in this trend for some more years to come. The bulk of the present budget goes towards expenses on personnel, especially in the army, and towards maintenance expenditure. There is little for modernisation of equipment including essential replacements for retiring equipment.

The availability of Soviet equipment at reasonable prices and on rupee payment is a thing of the past. Under the circumstances, it is natural that various means are canvassed which might get us over this difficult period without compromising on our defence effectiveness.

In this process, there are a few solutions being suggested which I believe are downright dangerous. One such is easing up on our R&D expenditure on some hi-tech equipment like the light combat aircraft and the Arjun main battle tank. There are various schools of thought which are pushing in this direction. One is an anti-defence R&D lobby which, in Parliament and the press, has been demanding the closure of these projects. Some believe our scientists are incapable of producing goods of the required quality and that money is being poured into a bottomless pit, while the deadline for production will continue to be postponed indefinitely. A few are interested more in imports which provide better pickings than production at home. Others believe that even if these are successfully produced, the cost would be very high due to technological sophistication and the lack of economics of scale. Thus it would be impossible to buy anywhere near enough with a tight budget: the best solution would be to continue obtaining more of the current generation of equipment by production at home or import from abroad.

Mysteriously, this kind of affliction has also affected our successful missile programme. There have been no great time and cost overruns nor have there been unfulfilled promises on the part of our scientists, yet there is reluctance to place orders for these. The kindest construction to place on this state of affairs is that it is due to the money crunch.

The Soviet Union no longer being an economical source of supply for sophisticated arms leaves the US and Western Europe almost the sole suppliers of hi-tech equipment. With the experience of the so-called missile control regime, one may expect more cooperation among these countries in denying even other hi-tech weapons systems to Third World countries, particularly those seen as having the potential to stand up to the West in regional matters. This is not the time to give up our quest for self-reliance (not self-sufficiency) in defence production. On the contrary, I suggest we increase our effort in this direction. We must bring designs to fruition and seal them after troop trials are carried out with an adequate number of equipment in order to infuse confidence in the user. If ordnance factories cannot afford to go into series production due to the lack of orders, so be it. But to stop research, development, and design only because of this reason would be self-inflicted injury.

Stopping research, development and design in hi-tech defence equipment, just because there is a shortage of funds and lack of orders from buyers, would certainly be a self-inflicted injury.

Trying to maintain forces at current levels with depleting finances in real terms would only lead to aging and unreliable weapons and equipment. This would erode combat power and make nonsense out of maintaining high force levels. Any attempts at cheese-paring at current force levels, and the usual belt-tightening exercises will not solve the problem. I would go to the extent of saying that even very comprehensive exercises carried out by the most competent of groups cannot find a solution as long as current force levels are sacrosanct.

I think that for continental defence, India, China and Pakistan can maintain the current kind of inter se balance in land and air forces but at much lower levels than at present. This cannot but be of benefit to all three countries. Admittedly, how much lower could this level be, would be a function of the degree of mutual trust. This can be built up over a period of time and levels could be adjusted downwards as trust increases. But this does not mean one must wait for a very cordial atmosphere before talks even start. One is not suggesting that one should let one's guard down very drastically or very suddenly, only gradually. The very act of talking and coming to agree to even a small reduction can have a catalytic effect in improving the levels of trust. This will give a fillip to seeking still better relations.

I have kept the navies of all three countries out of this proposition as they are not related to the force levels of each other. They will have to take into account threats from all quarters and of all the conventional forces—navies are what have true strategic reach today, not armies and tactical air forces. Airborne forces have strategic reach but are vulnerable except in low intensity war situations. Hence naval threats cannot be confined to those from neighbours only.

Nuclear forces are in a different class altogether. Mutual talks are necessary to maintain a low but adequate level of minimum or proportionate difference and to avoid nuclear arms racing. But that is a more complicated issue considering China is the only declared nuclear weapon power of the three. But talks on conventional arms limitation need not and should not wait for the nuclear Gordian knot to be cut.

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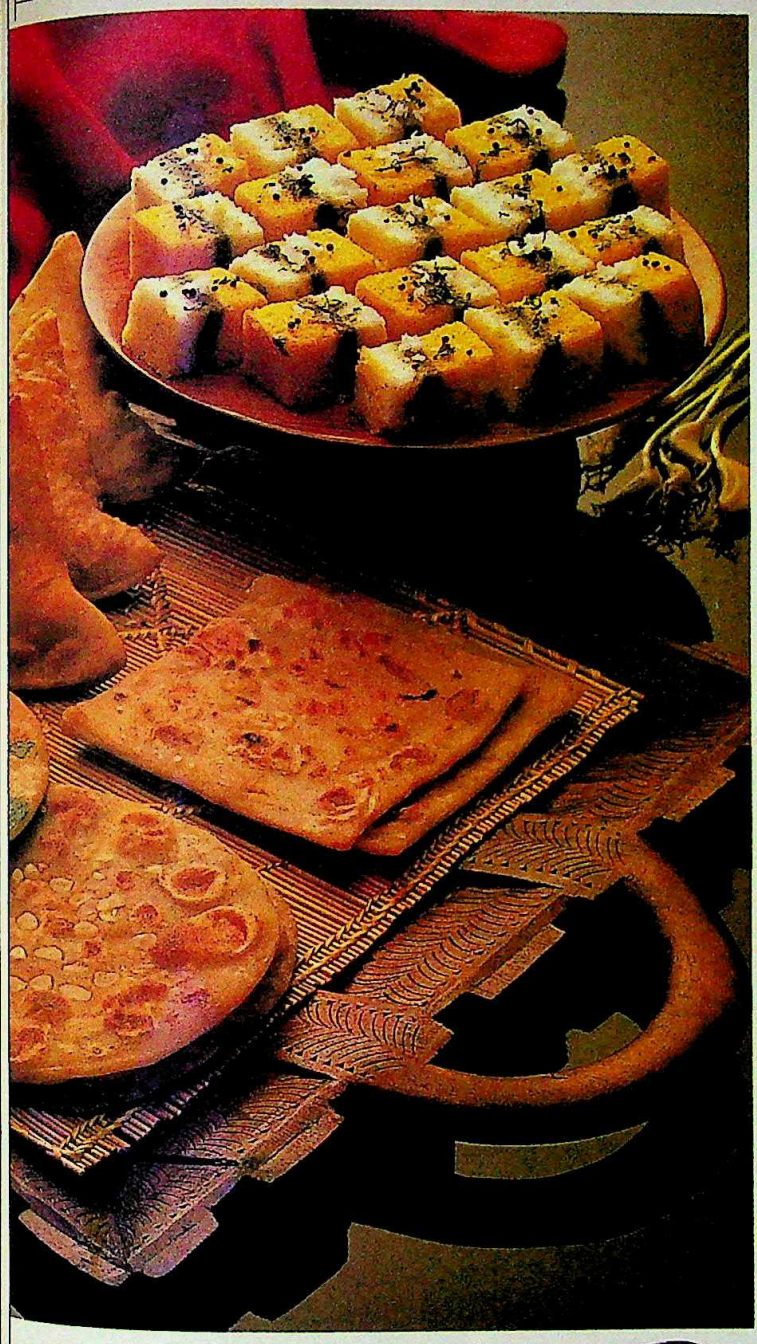

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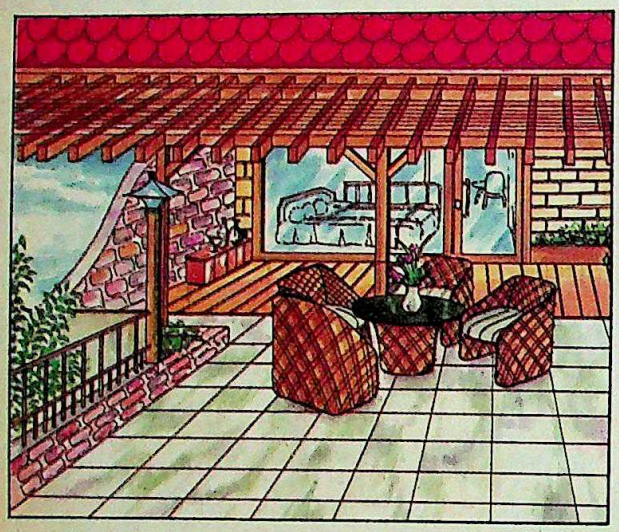

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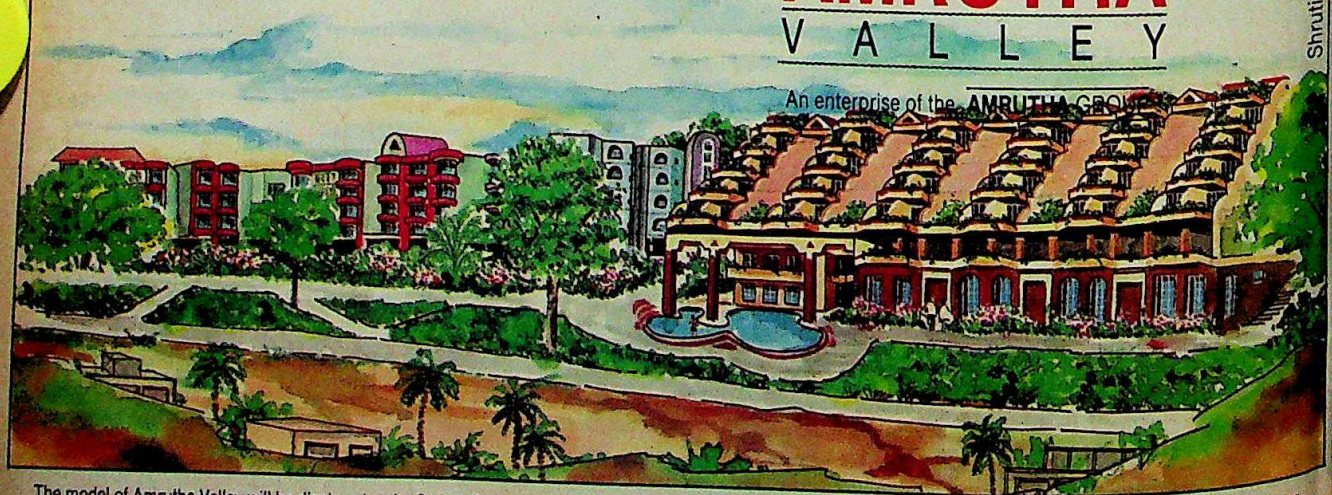

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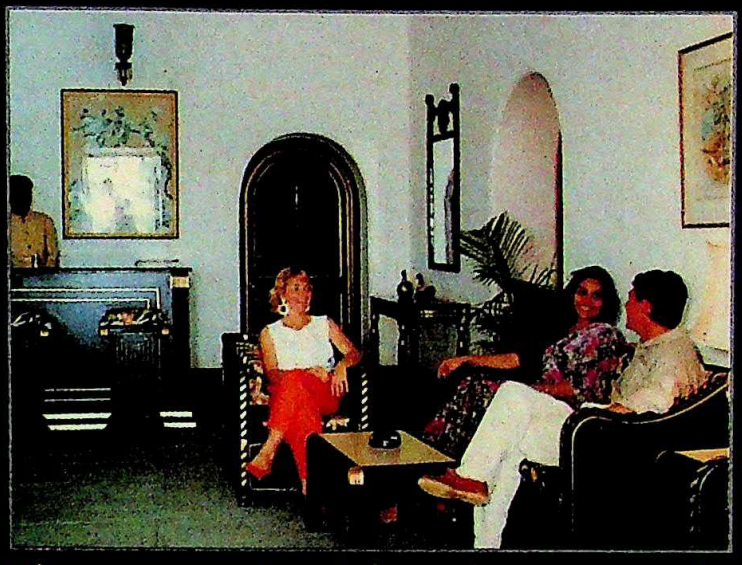

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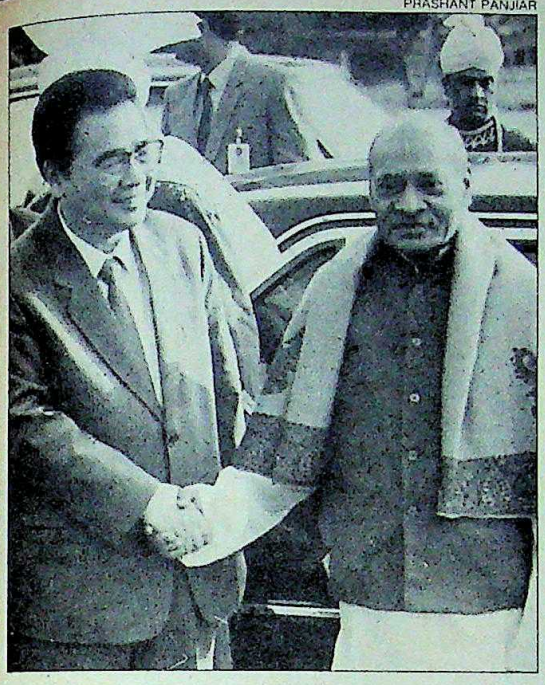

Li with Rao: muted moves

CHINA

Deferred Gains

Premier Li Peng's trip renews ties

IT had the potential to change the geopolitical equation in Asia. Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng's five-day visit to India, the first by such a high-ranking Chinese dignitary since Premier Zhou Enlai, could have achieved a lot. But falling between the twin stools of Chinese disinterest and Indian expectation, it seemed like a necessary chore.

The honoured guest politely went through the motions. But from the first quiet handshake with Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, it was obvious that the benefits are likely to accrue only in the long term. Li Peng too admitted at the outset of the visit that he did not expect to resolve all the problems, but hoped to "promote the process of achieving a settlement".

Given the hoopla generated by the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in December 1988, the return visit was initially expected to deliver more. The Chinese incentive for improving relations with India stems from both strategic and economic reasons. The collapse of former communist arch-enemy, the Soviet Union, with whom relations were improving, and the possible independence of its Muslim Asian republics give the Chinese pause for thought on two counts. One, that their own Marxist system might not survive the gales of democracy and two, their own Muslim-dominated provinces in the southwest might also demand freedom.

Also, post-Tiananmen, Sino-American relations are not what they were. For that reason, China is not averse to cultivating developing countries like India, though not at the cost of its oft-stated border stand. The best hope for survival of the present Chinese system is rapid and sustained economic growth. This means reducing defence expenditure, especially the strength of the People's Liberation Army, and, by implication, border threats.

The immediate tangible fruits of the visit were known in advance—reopening of respective consulates in Shanghai and Bombay, resumption of border trade in historically linked areas, and a memorandum of understanding on outer space. Given the presence of Minister of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade Li Lanqing, bilateral trade—currently running at an abysmally low Rs 88 crore—was expected to receive a boost. But even that was more in the nature of atmospherics.

The only point of contention was the Tibetan issue. New Delhi was clearly determined to ensure that Li Peng would not be embarrassed and went out of its way to reiterate that Tibet was an autonomous region of China. A day earlier, the Indian authorities prevented the Dalai Lama from meeting his followers or the press at the Delhi airport. The police also arrested several Tibetan exiles and beat up protesters at Majnu ka Tila in a distant part of Delhi where a demonstration was allowed.

But the manner in which both sides played down the visit was a clear indication that it was more in the nature of a courtesy call. The chinks in the bamboo curtain are still not wide enough for dramatics.—ARUN CHACKO

NEPAL

Winners All

Quantum leap in relations

CONTRARY to the norm, Girija Prasad Koirala's visit to India last fortnight was short on rhetoric but long on achievement. At the end of his foreign debut as Nepal's first democratically elected prime minister in 30 years, he had reason to be satisfied.

The two-day talks were beneficial for both sides. Koirala got India to accommodate Nepal's economic interests, quickly consigning the recent bilateral unpleasantness over the trade and transit treaties to oblivion.

On the economic side, Nepal stands to gain from the trade treaty which provides concessions on tariff and export of Nepalese goods to India. The transit treaty will do Nepal good by simplifying customs for it. At the same time, an agreement to check unauthorised trade on the border will benefit India's economy. An agreement on water resource development was also signed. This includes the setting up of six hydro-electric projects in Nepal, in return for which a power-hungry India will get hydro-electricity.

SHARAD SAXENA

Koirala: fruitful visit

Diplomatically too India is a winner. After the recent SAARC debacle, Koirala's visit has softened India's image as the subcontinent's big bully.

But Koirala still has to sell the package at home. An agreement on harnessing Nepal's water resources has been hanging fire so far due to Palace suspicion that it would be exploited by India. Now, his opponents will try to play the 'sell-out to India' card. Yet the first hurdle has been crossed. —HARINDER BAWEJA

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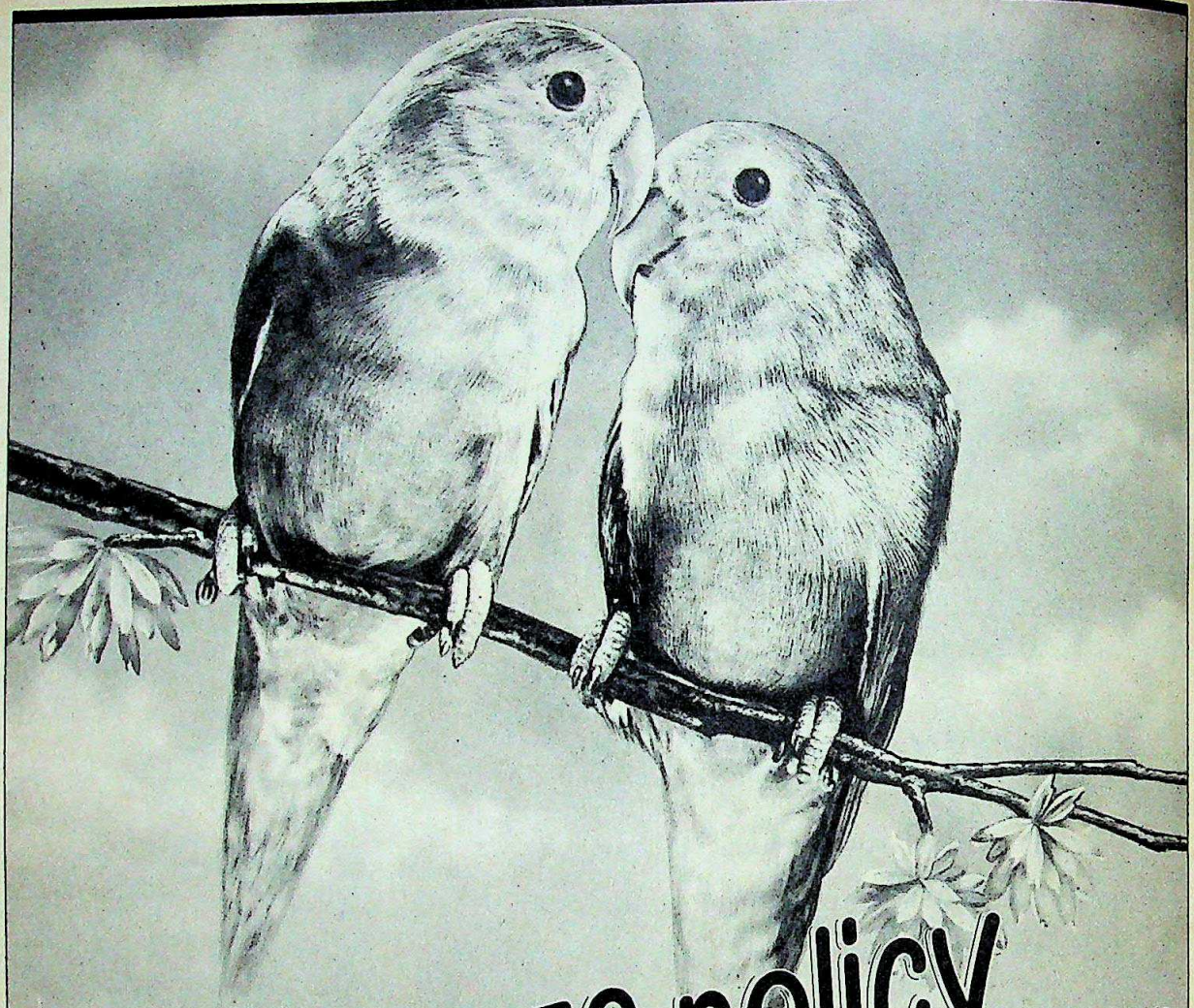

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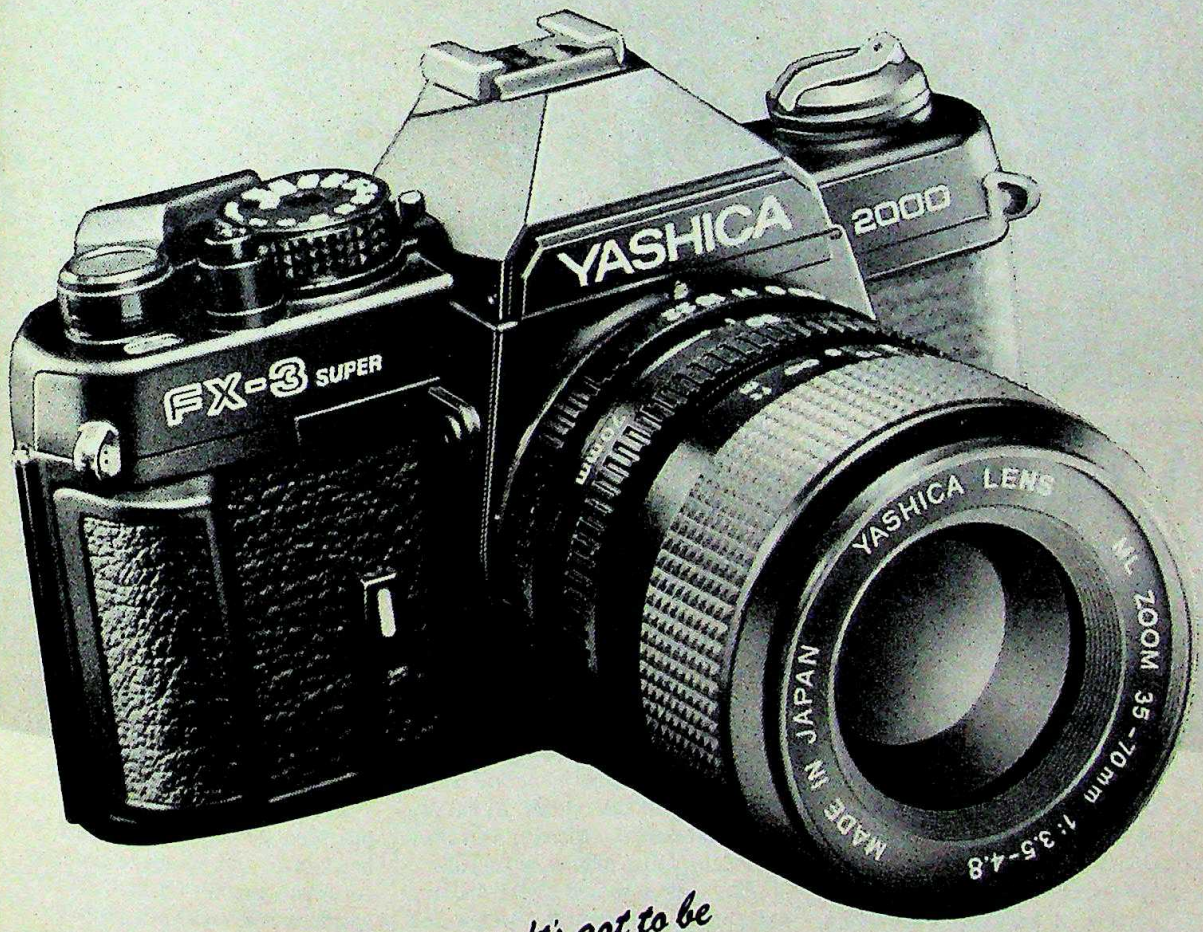

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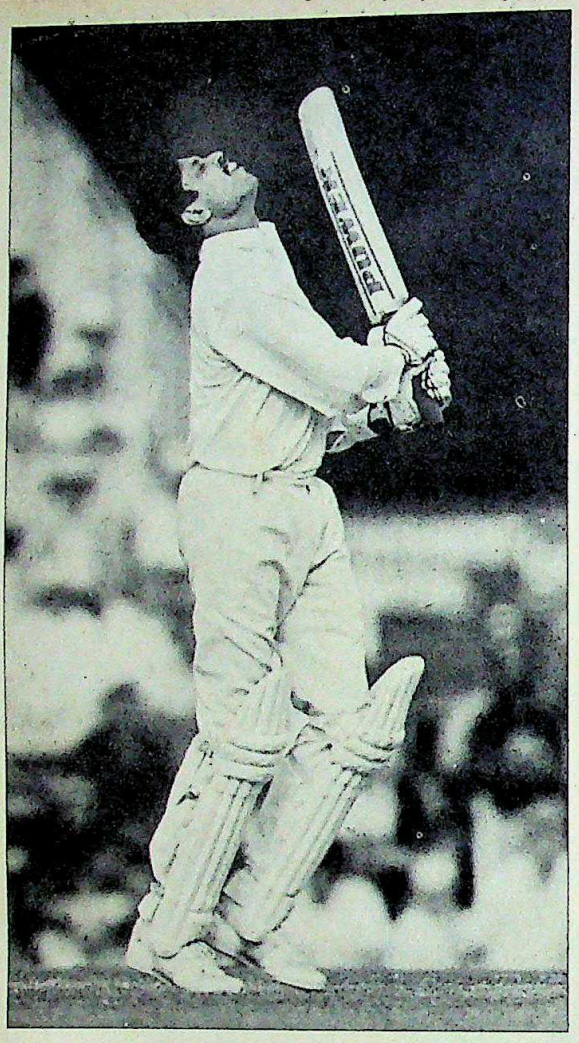

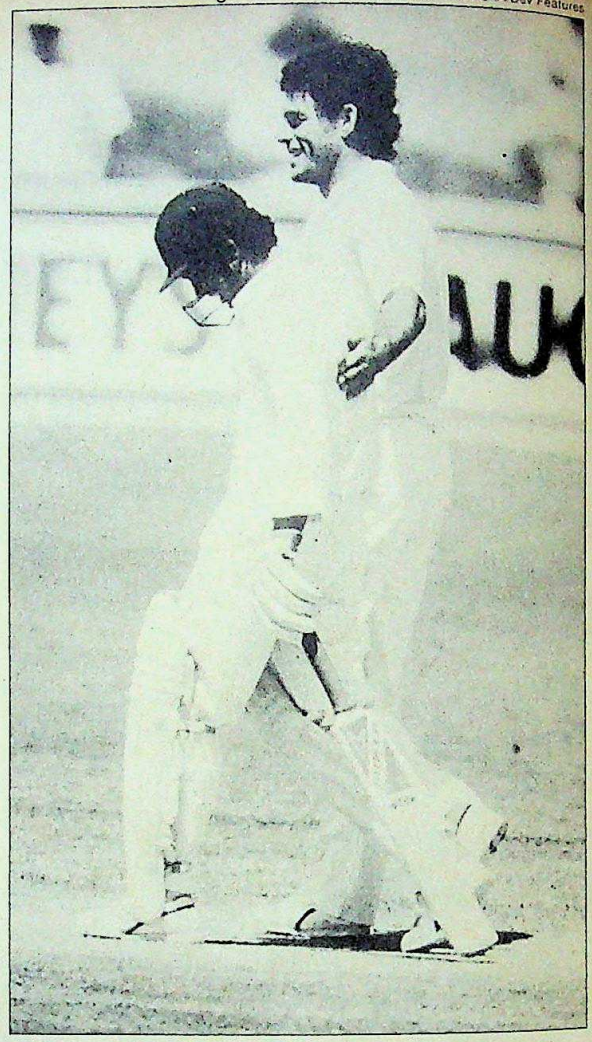

Kapil; and Whitney consoles Tendulkar: summer of discontent

CRICKET

A Sputtering Start

Indian team struggles to find form Down Under

CRICKET is sold as aggressively as merchandise in Australia. Before the first Test match between Indians and the Aussies, giant billboards appeared on Brisbane streets. The visual had a magician, in a resplendent robe and bejewelled turban, eyes flashing venom and intrigue, hands poised dramatically to complete an act of deceit. In the foreground were two players, a batsman resembling 'Kris' Srikkanth playing a sweep-pull and an unidentifiable spin bowler. The catchline: An Indian Summer.

Yet as the tour progressed, there seemed to be nothing magical about the Indian team's performance. If anything, its supposedly star batting lineup was mesmerised by both the bounce of Australian pitches and the penetration of its pace bowlers. And far from spin, it was the Indians' highly underestimated pace bowling attack that sprang all the surprises. Overall, for the Indian team it turned out be an Australian summer of discontent. Its batting pride has been punctured and an air of uncertainty and diffidence prevails.

The team's record so far, barring some brief sunshine at the Benson and Hedges World Series Championship, has been dismal. The humiliating defeats in the build-up games to the first Test saw morale dipping. The comprehensive defeat in the Brisbane Test saw the Aussies dismiss the team as lacking in "spice and curry". An opinion they somewhat reviewed when on a windswept Sunday, India ground favourites Australia by 107 runs in a Benson and Hedges one-dayer. And though the Indians lost at Hobart in Tasmania, there were indications that key batsmen like Sanjay Manjrekar and Sachin Tendulkar were getting their act together. The Indians seemed to be crawling back to form.

Yet limited-over cricket is no barometer of Test match performance. What the Indian batting line-up hasn't provided so far is, alarmingly, runs. Srikkanth, apprehensive and edgy after a two-year lay-off, looked as potent as a firecracker without gunpowder till his blistering innings against Australia in the one-dayer. Shastri is still at his dourest best. The biggest disappointment continues to be the middle order: Manjrekar, Tendulkar, Dilip Vengsarkar and skipper Mohammed Azharuddin. So much so that in the first Test the only half century came from Manoj

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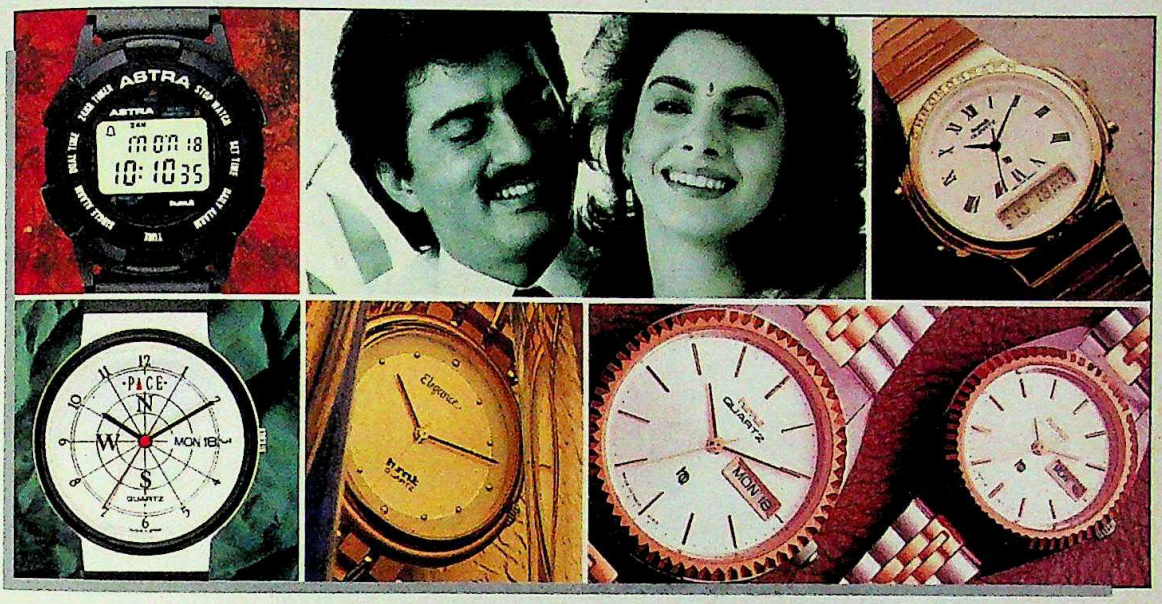

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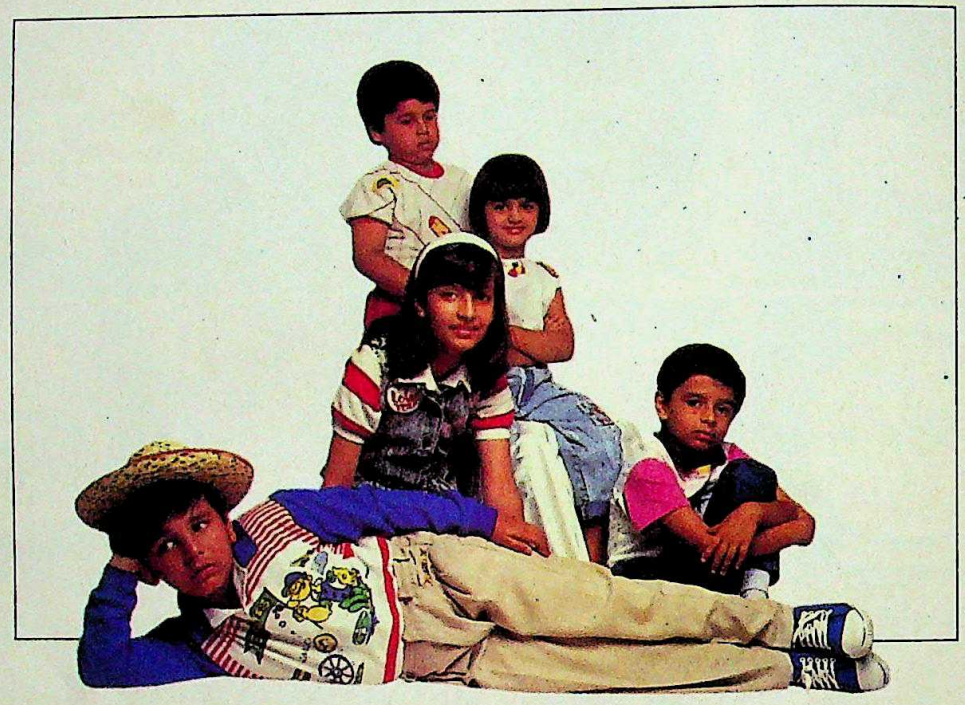

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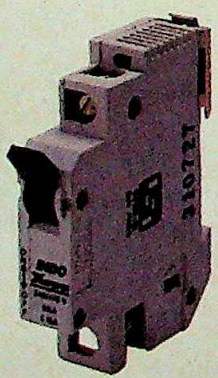

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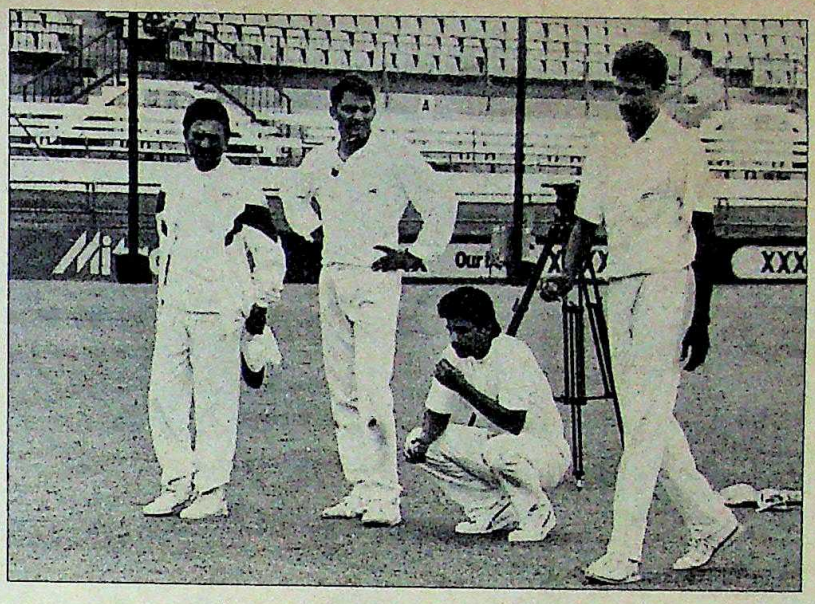
Prabhakar, batting at number eight.

The eclipse of the batting order had been startling, but not entirely without reason. The problems are both temperamental and technical. Arriving after a spate of one-day games back home, the Indian batsmen seemed sunk completely in the rhythm of limited overs batting. There was less care and more disdain in approach which predictably led to failure.

BY the time it was realised that this was a different ball game, the first Test had been lost. On the Gabba track, which afforded both bounce and pace, the Australian pacemen, Craig McDermott and Mervyn Hughes showed up the frailty of the Indian batting completely. "It is the bounce of the Australian wickets which is causing the Indian batsmen all the trouble," said former South African opener Barry Richards, now chief executive of the Queensland Cricket Association. "The ball comes up higher and quicker on the bat and for those coming from the slow, placid wickets of the Indian sub-continent, adapting has never been easy."

The Indians, traditionally wristy players, were finding most of their flicks going to the safe hands of the Australians. In the first Test at the Gabba, four batsmen were caught at forward short leg doing just that. "We do tend to use a lot of wrist in our strokes," admits Sanjay Manjrekar, "but asking us to alter the style now would be to stifle our batting completely. It is too ingrained."



Srinath, Prabhakar, Azharuddin and Baig: bowlers come good

If the pitches discomfited the Indian batsmen, they transformed the unheralded bowling attack into a lethal force. It would be detracting credit from the bowlers to cite only the helpful nature of pitches. For they bowled so far with a purpose and determination that Indian batsmen embarrassingly lacked. So much so that skipper Azharuddin exhorted his frontline strikers, saying: "We had better start

OFF-STUMP

A PERFECT NINE

KERRY Packer, the big bad Aussie who stymied the cricket establishment in the late '70s, may have switched off cricket and turned to polo, but his Channel Nine remains unchallenged in cricket coverage. Packer, in the news last fortnight for his aborted bid to take over the Fairfax group of newspapers—the owners of the Melbourne *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*—left for Argentina soon after to play polo and regain his composure.

But Channel Nine didn't lose its edge. There were the dozen cameras catching a vantage view from every conceivable angle including a "stump-vision" through a tiny lens hidden on a wicket. This was backed by commentary from six former captains of renown including Sunil Gavaskar and Tony Greig.

'Stump' vision camera

Gavaskar with Border: new ambassador

ON A DIFFERENT WICKET

SUNIL Gavaskar is being hailed as the new ambassador of Indian cricket. On television, for Channel Nine, he has sparred with Aussie commentators to defend his country's team. In discussions with aficionados and other critics, he has come down scathingly on Australian prejudice and preposterousness especially where Manoj Prabhakar was suspected of chucking. And suddenly, in Perth, he arrived at the nets to assist the Indian players. Would he like to manage the team? Gavaskar has only an enigmatic smile for a reply.

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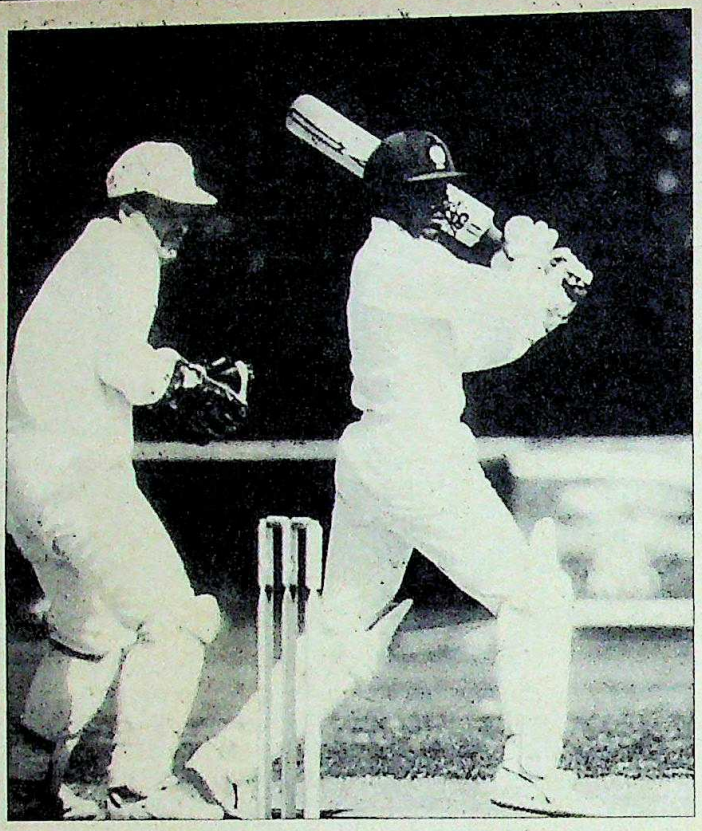
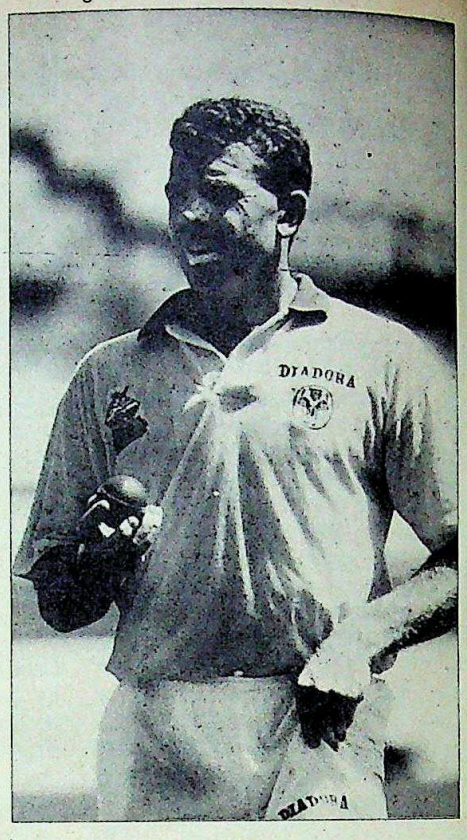


Manjrekar struggles to find form: brittle batting



McDermott: killing speed

supporting our bowlers."

The find of the tour so far has been Javagal Srinath, the wiry 22-year-old engineering student from Mysore. Tall and with a gangling action that is all hands and legs, Srinath has been able to generate as much pace as McDermott at times and surely as much bounce. He was able to push the Aussie batsman on to the backfoot and even compelled coach Bobby Simpson to view video recordings of his bowling more carefully. Captain Allan Border already believes he is the danger man for Australia.

Spearheading the new-found pace attack is the unflagging Kapil Dev. He seemed to have rediscovered his lethal out-swingers. Right through he has kept an impeccable line on the off and middle stumps to supplement his nagging length making him not merely the most difficult bowler to score off, but also the most dangerous. Manoj Prabhakar was menacing as he kept varying his speed and tilting his in-swingers late. Even Subroto Banerjee, an unlikely player on the tour, did well.

The team's ground fielding, however, has been shameful. Barring Azharuddin none of the players seemed willing to bend, dive or throw with telling vitality. The lackadaisical approach was indicated during the practice sessions before each match. It was a despicable charade with nonchalant batsmen playing listless bowlers while fielders aimlessly wandered around. Watching their antics, Richards commented: "So much of what happens during a match is determined during practice. I wonder if the Indian team knows this."

AFTER the Test match even the normally suave Abbas Ali Baig lost his equanimity and hauled the team up. "Some of our seniors have to do some hard thinking and work," Baig observed harshly. His tough talk did seem to have a positive fall-out. The net practice at Perth before the one-dayers was the first to be conducted professionally.

Former Indian skipper Sunil Gavaskar, who was there to provide helpful tips, advised Srikkanth to reduce the width of his stance. And told Azharuddin to wait for the ball instead of reaching for it constantly. "There is nothing gravely wrong with this side," feels Gavaskar, "nothing that cannot be corrected by rehearsing for half an hour in front of the mirror when they return to their rooms."

Azharuddin, for one, seemed to have changed his demeanour. Till the Test match was lost, the Indian skipper remained mild-mannered, unwilling to offend anyone. He did not even glare at players when they mis-fielded. And always treated seniors like Vengsarkar and Kapil Dev with kid gloves.

After the humiliating defeat, Azharuddin breathed fire. During practice sessions he chastised several players for not moving fast enough. And he was willing to appear to be more in charge, making decisive bowling changes. Unfortunately for him, he continues to struggle with his batting. That has considerably dented his confidence and during the one-day match against Australia in Hobart, he even sent Praveen Amre ahead of him.

The one-dayers, however, seemed to have done the Indian team good. Srikkanth regained his verve. And the middle-order seemed to be firming up. But if the team has to continue to do well for the rest of the season, its front-line batsmen have to put their heads down and concentrate. The fielding has to improve dramatically. And the ridiculous running between the wickets by the batsmen has to end. Only then the Aussies may see an Indian summer.

—AYAZ MEMON in Australia

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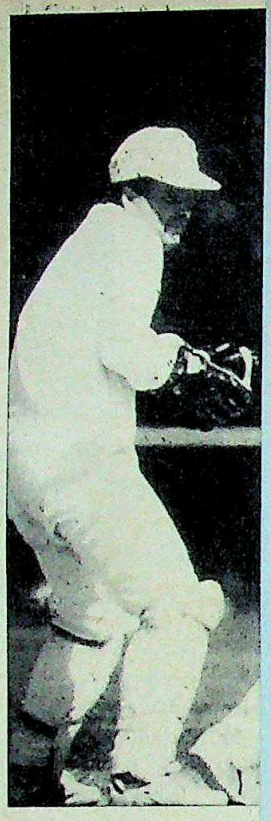

Manjrekar str

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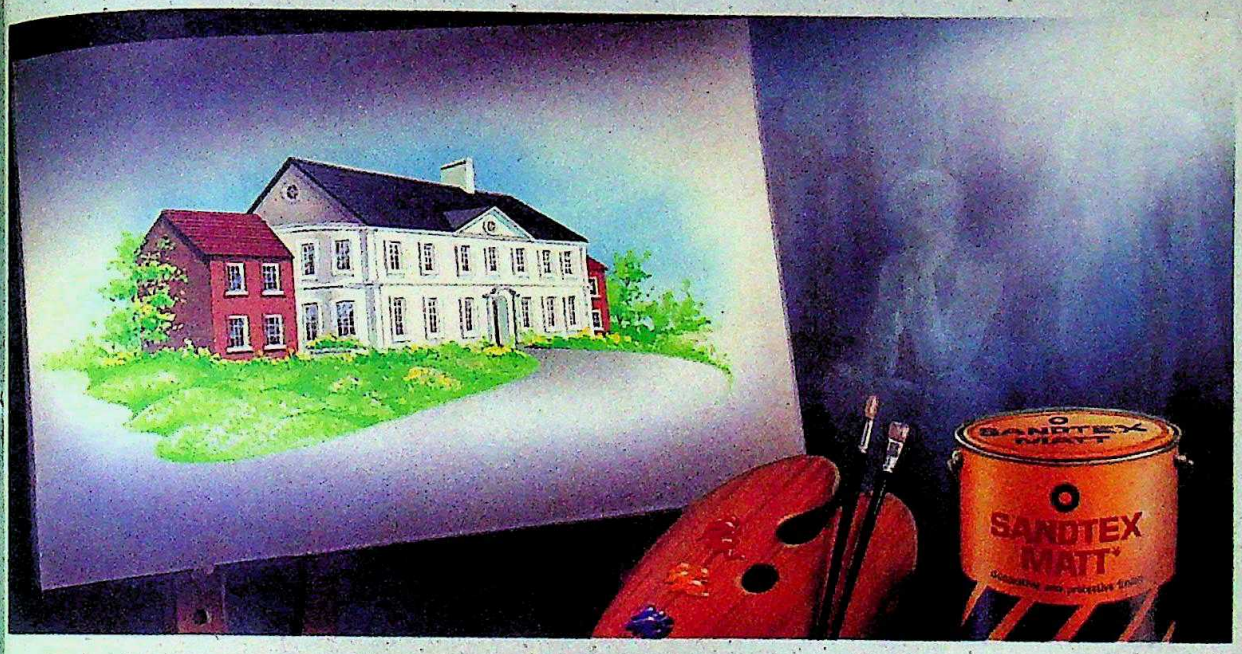

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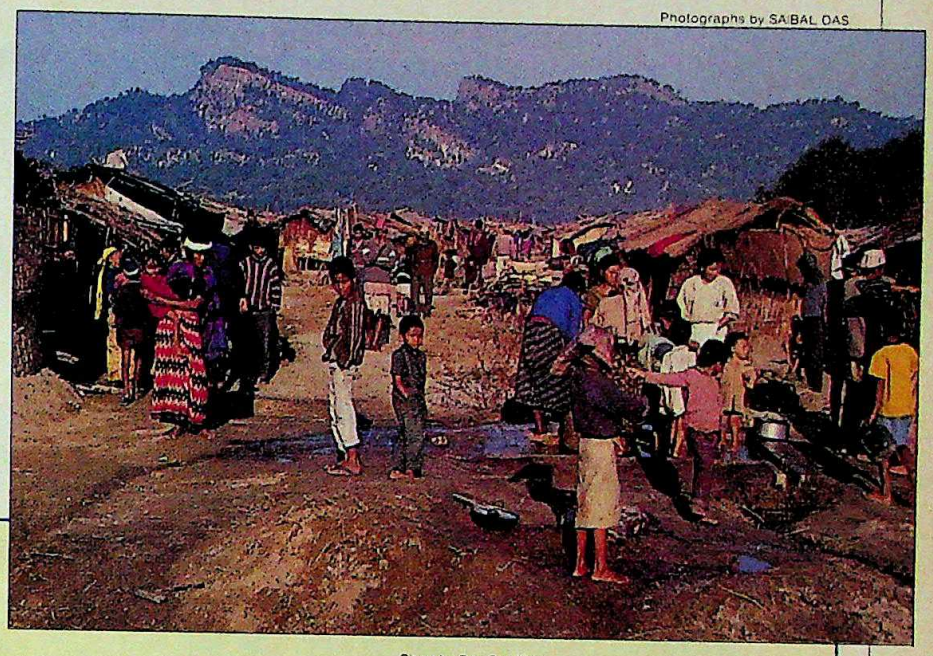
BHUTAN

Shattered Silence

As Nepalis flee, dissent threatens to become an international issue

WHEN King Jigme Singye Wangchuck cancelled his trip to the SAARC summit last month, it was the first admission to the world at large that his Shangri-La was under siege. From within. And despite his remaining at home, the "terrorism and demonstrations" that the King feared would rise in his absence, showed no signs of abating. If anything, the anti-monarchy agitation has only become fiercer and ethnic conflict in southern Bhutan more violent over the past three years.

Photographs by SAIBAL DAS



Southern Bhutanese at Jhapa camp

REFUGEE CAMPS

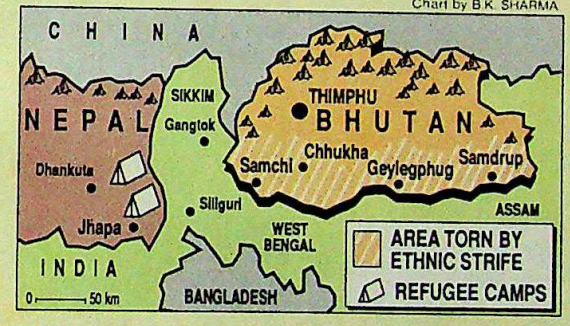
Tales of Terror

IT began as a trickle—and slowly turned into a deluge. Since the beginning of the year, about 8,000 Bhutanese refugees of Nepali descent have crossed over into Nepal. Living in abysmal conditions at the two camps in Jhapa district in eastern Nepal, each has a tale of atrocity to tell. Atrocities, they allege, committed by the Royal Army.

Battered and bruised, these refugees from south Bhutan are the very picture of desolation. About 82 refugees—half of them children—at the Maidhar camp have already died. Chandra Prasad Rai, 31, and his wife Buddharani, 30, have already lost two children at the camp. Said Rai, as he carried his dead child for burial: "Today, I'm not bothered about my dead children. I just want to return to my other two children in Bhutan."

He isn't the only one in a daze. Dhanman Jimba, 48, is also in a stupor after his son, Kulbahadur Jimba, 25, died at the camp. But he doesn't want to go back to Bhutan. "I won't get any medicines there. Besides, we've been ostracised."

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



But ostracism is just the beginning of the story. Donam Dorji, 26, fled four months ago due to army torture. "I couldn't take it any more. They were burning houses and raping our women," he says.

The horrific cases of rape are endless. Recalls Maya Basnet: "On the night of October 10, three armymen came into my house and asked my husband to leave. Then they raped me and left." More traumatised is Dilkumari Rai, 23, who gave birth to twin daughters—both died later—at the Jhapa camp after being raped in jail in Bhutan.

A ghoulish story can also be read in the scars on the face of Purnima, 3. She was burnt when, according to her mother, "the army set our house on fire".

Escaping what they say are unliveable conditions, the refugees keep pouring in. On December 7, there were 60 fresh arrivals—all of whom left behind vast properties. Some were asked to leave for helping the pro-democracy BPP. Purna Bahadur Rai, 50, who came with his wife and three children, was paid just Rs 20,000 as compensation for 10 acres of farmland. Others got no compensation at all.

Predictably, Bhutan Home Minister Dago Tshering denies all this. Says he: "The charges are levelled by anti-nationals. We have received no complaints till now. And we are driving out nobody. They are leaving on their own accord."

But they have little choice.

—SOUTIK BISWAS in Jhapa

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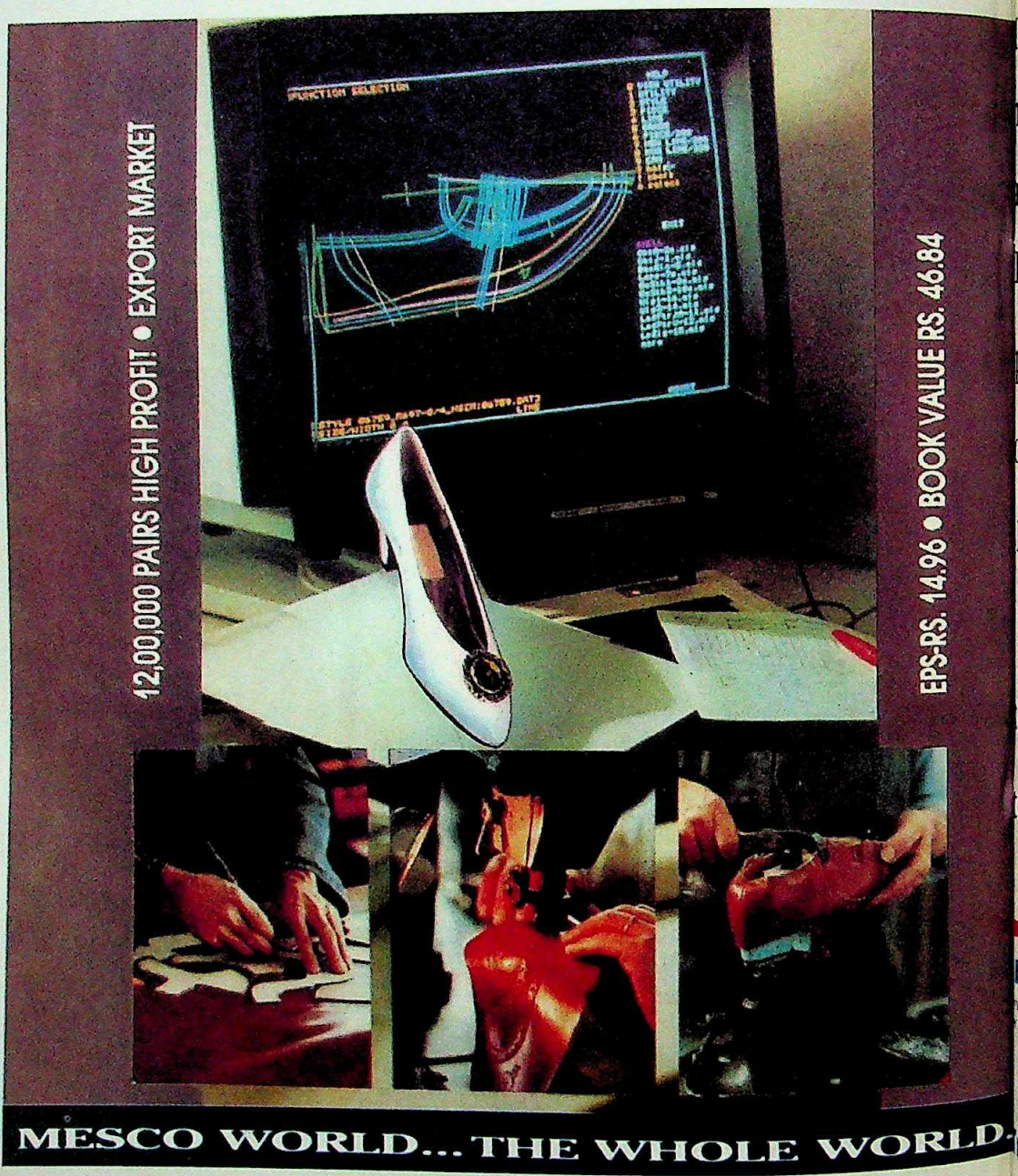

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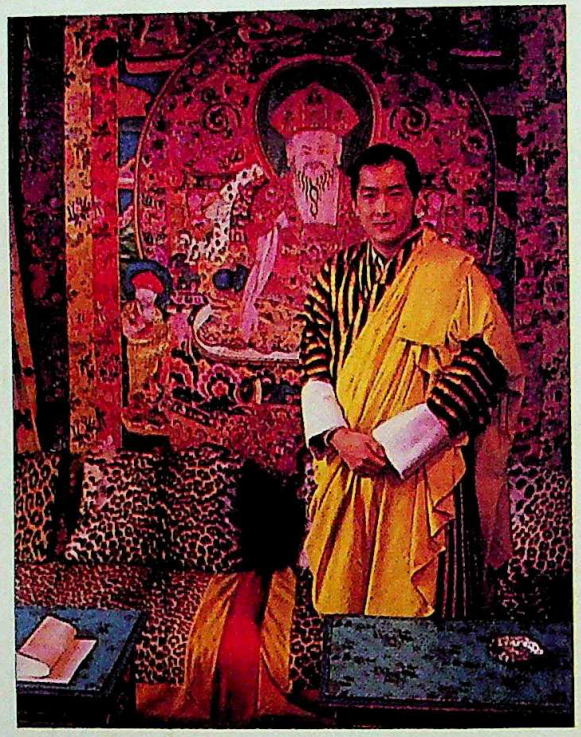
SNOWBALLING WOES

- Anti-King movement by banned BPP turns fiercer.
- Hardliners scotch the King's conciliatory moves.
- Anti-Nepali policies worsen ethnic divide.
- Foreign aid may stop.

The xenophobia aroused by Nepali settlers has intensified, with hardliners in the Royal Government stepping up repression. But the worst news for the monarch is the exodus of Nepalis from south Bhutan, or *lhotsampas*, who have been forced to flee to Nepal.

And as a hitherto domestic problem spreads beyond Bhutan's borders, India, as the key player in the subcontinent, characteristically keeps a cautious watch on the King's accumulating anxieties. The first signs that he was feeling hemmed in were apparent in October, when the monarch startled the National Assembly by saying he would abdicate were he unable to solve the problems in two years. But a solution is like a mirage at the moment.



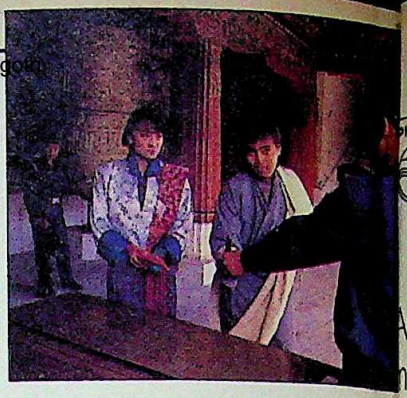
The King; and ID card checking in Tasichho Dzong

ALTHOUGH the 35-year-old Wangchuck wants to adopt a conciliatory approach, diplomats in Thimphu believe that the hardliners are refusing to loosen their vice-like grip on the Tasichho Dzong, the seat of power. They are afraid of a repeat of Nepal where the democracy movement pushed aside the monarchy. It's at their behest that the Royal Government has shown the door to the "illegal" Nepali immigrants, banned the pro-democracy Bhutan People's Party (BPP), and declared the five southern districts a disturbed area.

India should be worried. One, New Delhi has a favourable bilateral trade balance with the Himalayan kingdom and wouldn't want its apple cart upset due to the disquiet there. Two, India's assistance is 40 per cent of all outside aid, which in turn is as much as 70 per cent of the budget of a country of only six lakh people. But, as an international banker visiting Thimphu said, the aid will now be used to beef up the Government's security in the south. The Indian diplomats in the capital are being cagey. The most they will say is that Bhutan should "face up to geopolitical realities".

A Bhutan Defence Ministry official, while conceding that the country cannot remain insular and an eternal monarchy, said: "We are not ready for democracy yet. At this stage it will lead to mayhem." He is perhaps right. Until three years ago, there was no political activity in the Land of the Thunder Dragon. Then the BPP burst upon the scene. Though banned, its agitation for multi-party democracy has taken a heavy toll. The Ministry of Home Affairs has released alarming statistics: 33 murders, 174 kidnappings, 123 native Bhutanese attacked by "anti-nationals", or *ngolops*, and several cases of arson and destruction of schools, forest offices, stores, health centres and bridges. The Government says the BPP is responsible for all this. Says Home Minister Dago Tshering: "We are now facing the problem of containing terrorism by *ngolops*."

To check violence, a majority of the kingdom's 2,000-odd police and 5,000-strong military has been posted in the south. The clampdown has forced about 8,000 *lhotsampas* to flee to the country of their origin *(see box)*. And with human rights bodies like Amnesty International visiting the refugee camps, Bhutan's ethnic problem has come under world scrutiny.



But there is more. The issue of one lakh "illegal" Nepali migrants remains unresolved. Fearing that they will endanger the identity of the Drukpa, or the original Bhutanese, the Government wants them out. And it is promising the immigrants a golden handshake—handsome compensations for their landholdings. But, as the "just eviction" policy degenerates into witch-hunting, there have been many desertions by officers of Nepali descent.

Worse, the Government is fanning anti-Nepali sentiment. It has sent out copies of a booklet titled *Anti-national Activities in South Bhutan—a Terrorist Movement* to schools. The booklet carries explicit photographs of arson and murders—including beheadings and bomb-blown bodies—committed by *ngolops*. Said a diplomat in Thimphu: "The Government wants to fill young minds with hatred for the Nepalis."

The hardliners have even scotched the King's attempts at a soft approach. He granted amnesty to nearly 900 *ngolops* arrested by the police. But when he wanted to restart the development work in the southern districts of Samchi, Geylegphug, Samdrup Jongkhar, Chirang and Chhukha, there was resistance in the National Assembly. Says Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering: "The King had taken a tolerant view. Many feel that tolerance doesn't work with the terrorists."

But with outside economic aid increasingly linked to human rights, even Dawa Tshering is worried. The King indeed will have to assert himself to avert the gathering storm. Or, the dragon will lose its thunder.

—SOUTIK BISWAS in Thimphu

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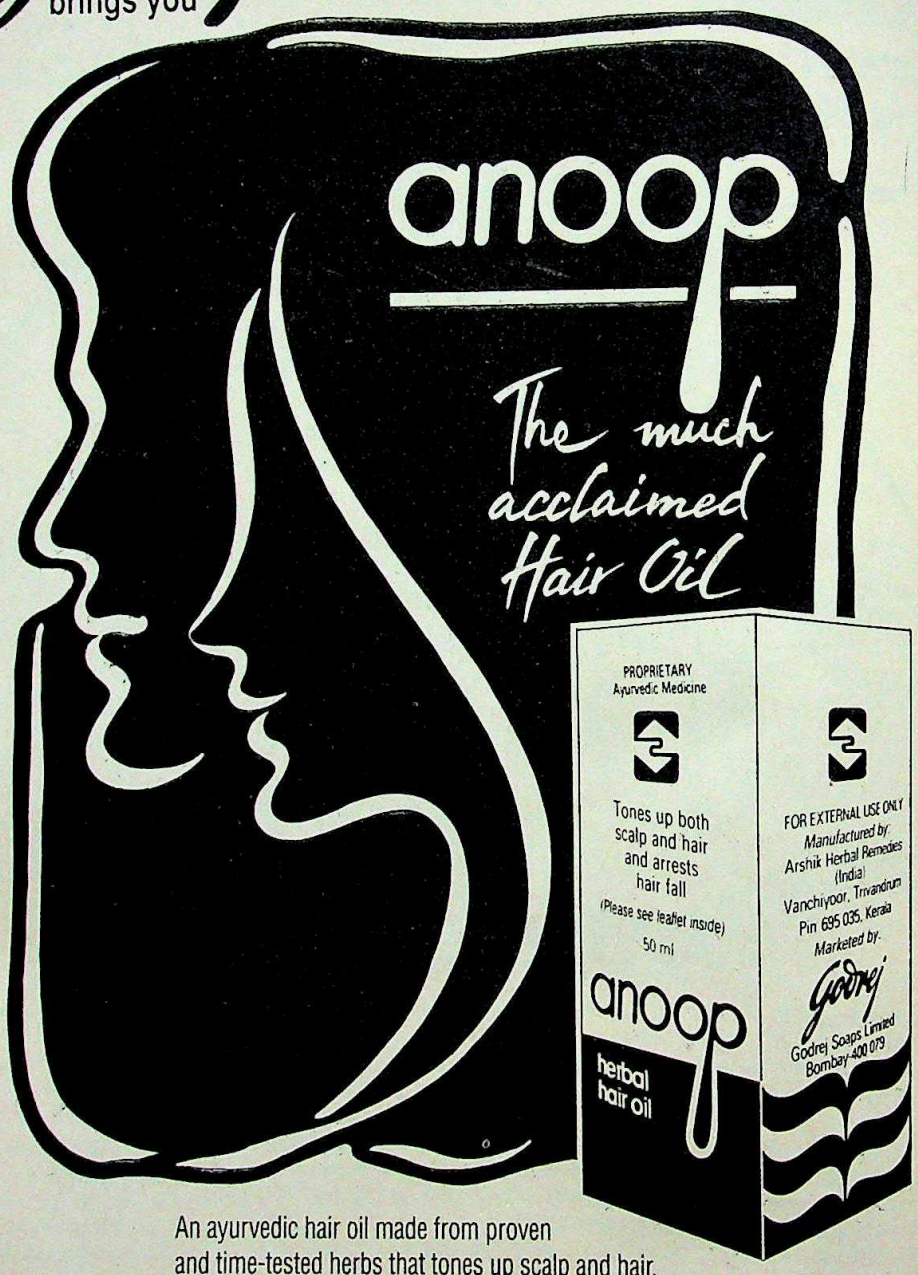

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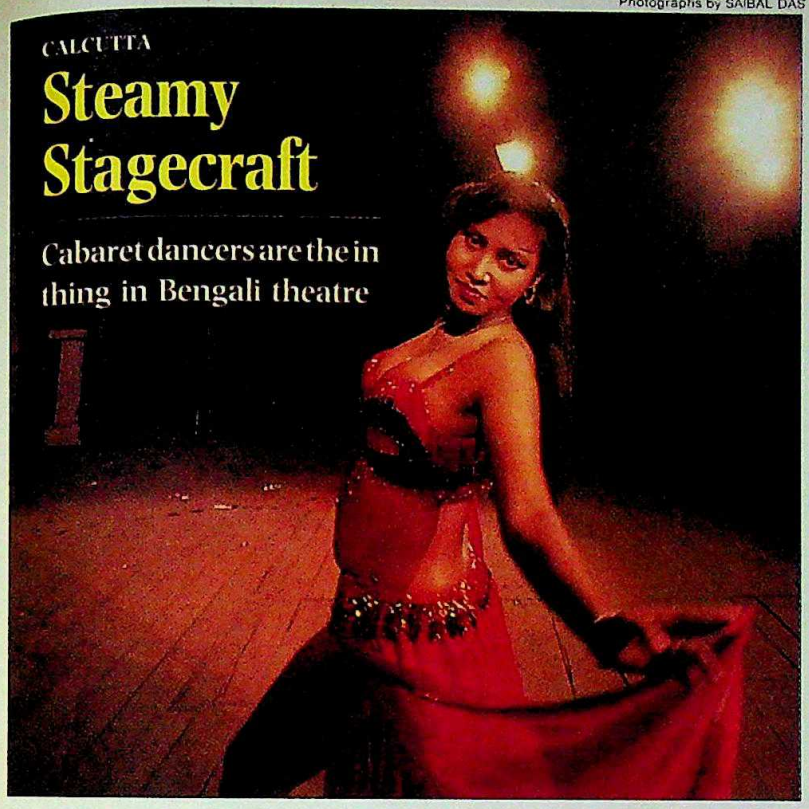


CALCUTTA

Steamy Stagecraft

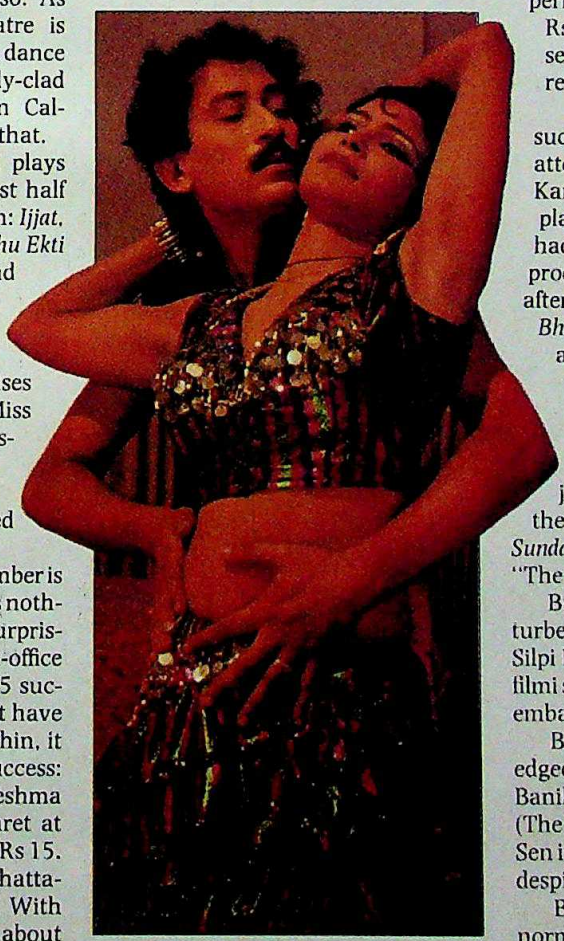
Cabaret dancers are the in thing in Bengali theatre

LIFE is a cabaret. And it's not just Liza Minelli who thinks so. As Bengali commercial theatre is rapidly swamped by raunchy dance numbers performed by skimpily-clad women, even theatre-goers in Calcutta are beginning to believe that.

Currently, of the nine-odd plays being staged in the city, at least half have a sexy dance. Among them: *Ijjat*, *Ora Kara* (Who Are They?), *Sudhu Ekti Raat* (Only One Night) and *Sangam*. The publicity drive says it all. While the title of *Sudhu Ekti Raat* itself is suggestive, the advertisement promises even more. In the form of Miss Minakshi and "many more miss-miss-miss". Rues theatre personality Rudraprasad Sengupta: "Theatre has been robbed of its sanctity."

It sure has. For the dance number is merely meant to titillate and has nothing to do with the story. Not surprisingly, all the plays are box-office draws. *Ijjat* has already had 105 successful shows. Though it doesn't have a star cast and the storyline is thin, it has all the other ingredients of success: a shapely Miss Shefali, Miss Reshma and Miss Sovana doing a cabaret at tickets priced between Rs 7 and Rs 15. Says its producer, Kanchan Bhattacharjee: "I've hit the jackpot." With every show he rakes in about Rs 11,000. His investment: Rs 40,000.

Dances from *Sangam* (above), *Ijjat*



Sangam has also crossed the 60-show mark—and is still going strong. The reason: it's packed with cabarets by Miss Rinki, Miss Romi and Miss Protima. Says Sunit Das, the writer of *Sangam*: "Entertainment is on my mind when I write my plays."

Only what passes off as entertainment is nothing more than the bump-and-grind routine. The dances, set to Hindi film music, are rarely choreographed. And the dancers, who have feet of clay, are untrained. But the audience loves it. Said Sekhar Chatterjee, a government employee: "Where else can you see so many buxom beauties at one place, and that too at such a cheap price."

The reasons for the smut glut are obvious. Sleaze on stage sells well. Says dancer Protima: "The plays sell because we bare and dare." Moreover, with the Left Government banning cabarets in hotels and restaurants, theatre is the obvious alternative for prurient shows. Barun Ghosh, the assistant director of *Ijjat*, is candid: "We're cashing in on the dances."

So are the dancers. Apparently, Shefali is paid Rs 8,000 a month to perform in a play. Others get between Rs 800 and Rs 1,500. But many settle for less as they come from the red light area, Sonagachi.

Many directors have turned to such crass plays only after their attempts at serious theatre bombed. Kanchan Bhattacharjee's earlier play, *Jiban Sangini*, failed though it had a star cast. Similarly, *Sangam* producer Aloke Das lost Rs 3 lakh after his first two productions, *Sudhu Bhalobasa* and *Priya Barbadhu*. But after the steamy *Sangam*, he's paid off some of his debts.

The directors defend the inclusion of cabarets in the plays. Argues Samar Mukherjee, the director who popularised the cabaret on stage with *Samrat O Sundari* (The King and the Beauty): "The stories need them."

But serious theatre lovers are perturbed. Ambar Roy of the Samakalin Silpi Dal says "they're as irrelevant as filmi songs are". Even dancer Shefali is embarrassed: "It's getting too much."

But serious theatre hasn't been edged out altogether. Ramprasad Banik's new play, *Bhalo Kharap Meye* (The Good Bad Girl)—with Aparna Sen in the cast—is running full houses despite being clean.

But now clean is the exception; the norm is porn. —RUBEN BANERJEE

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Studies in Sensitivity

Expatriates make their mark

By MADHU JAIN

SALMAN Rushdie spoke of the "elastic bands" that connected him, the expatriate writer, to the subcontinent. Stretched to the limit thus, he could look objectively to where he came from—without merging into his new habitat.

In the books under review, the three women writers use their *pardesi* perches similarly—the distance transmuting into binoculars for fiction on the homeland. Remarkable about the collection of stories by Anjana Appachana—a writer to watch—and the novels by Farhana Sheikh and Belinder Dhanoa is the frankness with which they strip society's hypocrisy. Truth-tales with dark underbellies.

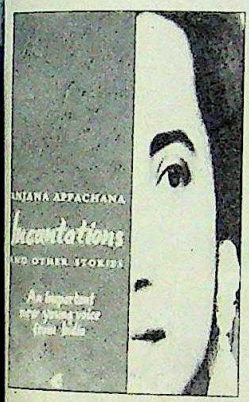
Appachana's stories may be about ordinary people—a frustrated clerk who-would-be-officer, a little girl obsessed with her mother, the wife repeatedly raped by her brother-in-law until she kills herself. But, collectively, these stories portray the tragedy of those caught in the whirlpool of urban India. Appachana has gone behind the headlines of newspaper crimes and fleshed them into dynamic prose.

In her debut novel, Farhana Sheikh, a Pakistani teacher in London, looks at second-generation Pakistanis. The backdrop is a London school riddled with racism. The storyline: Raisa, a Pakistani teacher with a cosmopolitan upbringing, is doing a report on two girls caught between being good Muslims and fitting in with England. What does Raisa—or Sheikh—share with these working class girls? A racial incident brings the truth home. When it comes to the crunch, those who take pride in "passing for white" are in the firing line. What makes this book interesting is the flitting between Islamabad—the yuppie parties in mansions which are "more Louis XIV than Moghul" and where booze flows—and Asian ghettos where drinking is a sin.

Similarly, Dhanoa intercuts the old world with the new—New Jersey, USA, where the protagonist, Pratibha, discovers the American wife of her green card husband and a Chandigarh in which the shadows of terrorism determine the Singhs' tragic destiny.

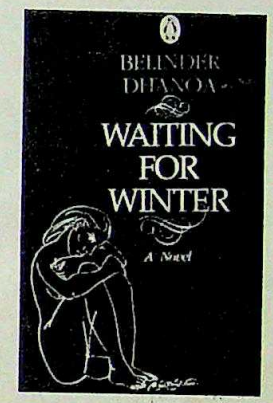
But terrorism is only a background in this disturbing book which in some flashes touches a near-Sylvia Plath intensity and darkness. Essentially, it is about growing up female in a convention-ridden society. Dhanoa throws out several skeletons: Mrs Singh's adolescence engineered by a hyperactive libido, her smothering affection for her son who ends up a militant; Singh's homosexual past and celibate present.

Different these three works, certainly are, but a welcome acute female sensibility informs them all.



Virago Press
Pages: 150; Price: Rs 225

Rupa & Co
Pages: 228; Price: Rs 50

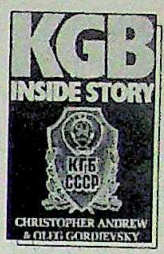


Penguin-India
Pages: 191; Price: Rs 65

Though different, these first works explore the feminine psyche with candour and insight.

Spying Saga

KGB activities chronicled



KGB: THE INSIDE STORY
by CHRISTOPHER ANDREW and O. GORDIEVSKY
Hodder and Stoughton; distributed by IBH
Pages: 714
Price: Rs 900

By SHEKHAR GUPTA

AS the KGB station chief at Copenhagen in 1973, Gordievsky picked up a biography of Kim Philby and sent it to the legendary spy. Pat came the reply from Moscow: "My dear colleague Oleg: don't believe anything about me which you see in print."

It is this mystique of the Magnificent Five that the authors here try to plumb. The book's main claim is that it reveals for the first time the identity of the fifth member of the Cambridge Gang: John Cairncross. There has been speculation on that name. But this claim needs to be taken more seriously as Gordievsky defected to the West as recently as in 1965 and served a long innings as the KGB's London chief. It is a different matter though that he too worked as a double agent. But whatever his loyalty, there is no faulting his memory and enterprise—he must have escaped with a bagful of notes if not floppies. It was inevitable that he teamed up with Christopher Andrew, well-known espionage historian.

From the heady days of Tsarist conquests through Stalinist purges, the Cold War, the Brezhnev era and the arrival of Gorbachev, the book gives a fascinating account of the agency's incredible successes. To those in the Indian foreign office who forever crib about RAW's inability to provide real intelligence to back up diplomacy, the book is essential reading. For this is where the Soviets have used the dreaded agency in the most telling fashion. The Brezhnev era and then the slow opening up, shifted Moscow's emphasis from political espionage to technological intelligence gathering. And it was this that made India special for the KGB. Several western technologies were available here and the system friendlier. Consequently, the authors say, by the early '70s the KGB

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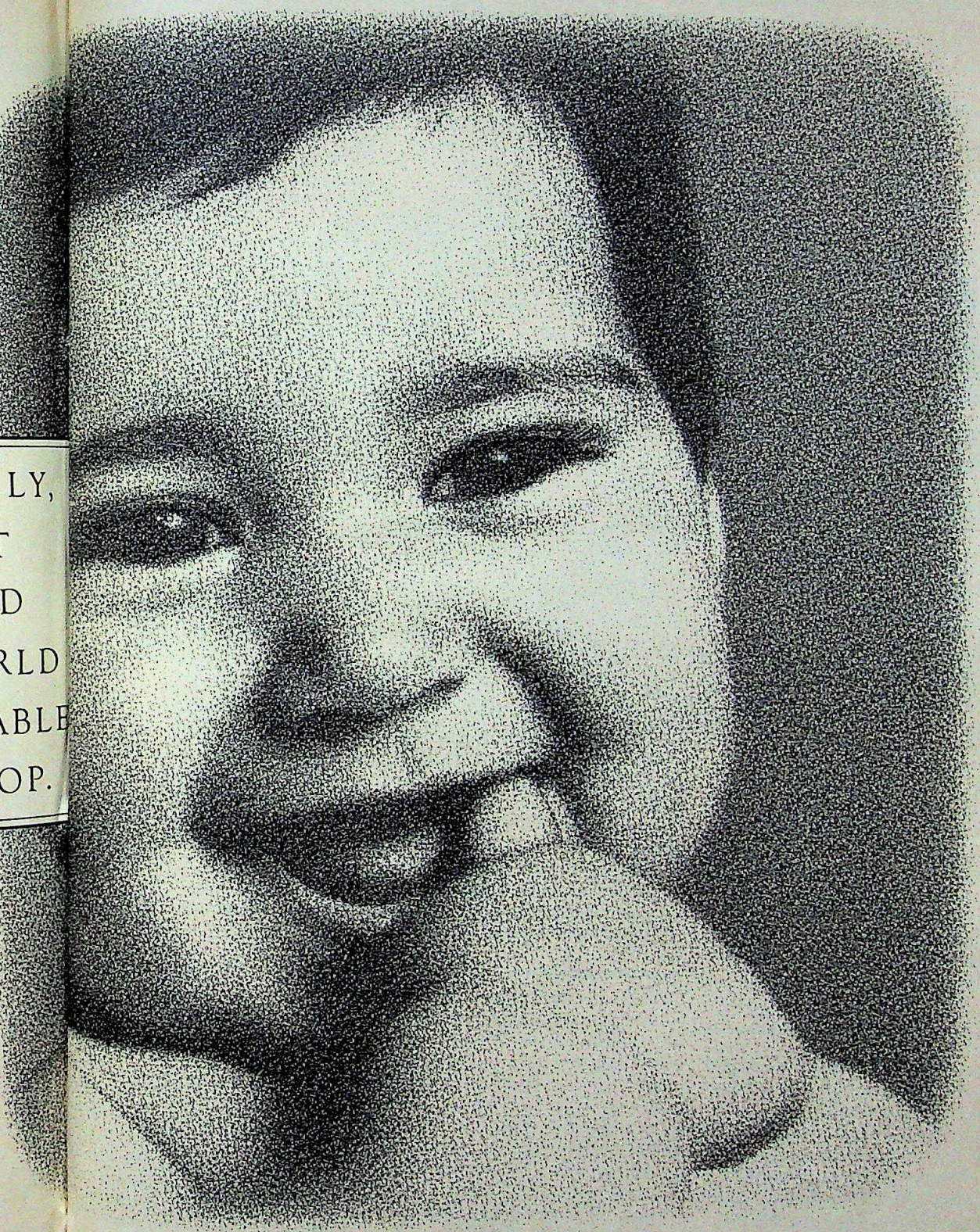

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had built in New Delhi, the biggest residency in any Third World country.

The was another factor too. The KGB worked assiduously to exploit the presence of a free English language press which seemed gullible. From allegations of American germ warfare in Vietnam to smear campaigns against right-wing Indian politicians, to the famous controversy about the AIDS virus having been created in a US defence lab, KGB residents planted forgeries on the Indian media from where international campaigns were launched.

The KGB headquarters in Moscow

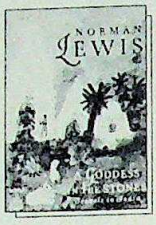
There is plenty else in the book in keeping with the new post-Cold War kiss-and-tell genre as old spies come out of the closet and make hefty dollars by betraying old friends, contacts, employers and ideologies. The Indian reader could complain there is not much on the crucial phase between 1968 and 1976 when cooperation between the two nations had peaked. We Indians could also dispute the claim that the 1971 Indo-Soviet treaty was a clear KGB victory—the entire residency in Delhi got promotions across the board. But perhaps we have to wait for the venerable Ram Nath Kao to break his silence for the last word on that.

E X C E R P T

With the expansion of scientific and technological espionage, India also steadily became more important as a channel through which to gain access to forbidden western technology. Gordievsky recalls one occasion in the mid-'70s when the head of directorate, L. Sergeevich Zaitsev, outraged by the failure of Line X (scientific and technological intelligence) officers in the US, Western Europe and Japan to obtain a particular piece of equipment, swore violently: "In that case, I'll have to get it through our Indian contacts! I know they won't let me down!"

Straying Off

Elegant prose, random travels



A GODDESS IN THE STONES: TRAVELS IN INDIA
by NORMAN LEWIS
Jonathan Cape.
Distributed by Rupa & Co
Pages: 322
Price: Rs 615

By RUKUN ADVANI

IF I were a traveller, my most overwhelming desire would be to go as far as possible from Bihar. Clearly, the one thing the author of this book is not, is me—he wants to visit Bhagalpur. Stranger still, he actually does. He sees with his own eyes the country of the blinded, where the one-eyed man is usually a policeman. That is, when he is not a thug of some other variety, such as a booth-capturer or a coal mafia don.

Lewis lives in England in monastic isolation, emerging from his shell once every few years to endow the world with his next travel masterpiece. As with Greta Garbo and Bobby Fischer, his reclusiveness is allied to exceptional skill: the elegance of his English makes him the sort of maestro now nearly extinct. You would not expect such a man, who seems in his right mind, to catch a flight to Patna.

But he does. This is because he is unfearful to tread where angels wouldn't be seen on tiptoe. "He relaxes by his travels to offbeat parts of the world," says the blurb, "which he prefers to be as remote as possible". Someone forgot to tell Lewis that Bihar and Orissa are no longer remote.

Lewis touches down upon 'the capital of Bihar...that metropolis of civic abuse'. And this serves as his *entree* into insane hinterland towns where industrial pollution and feudal politics have obliterated women and the countryside. Lewis' prose is elegant, his descriptions frequently memorable. It seems a pity so much style is wasted upon something as formidably atrocious as the badlands of Bihar. Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Bhagalpur, the sort of junkyards that corrode the polish of Lewis' first hundred pages, might be better left to feuding caste armies.

The ground gets better in Part II, when Lewis escapes into Orissa. Here he touches first upon temples in Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konarak, later upon the tribals. And his observations within Orissa are often acute and witty: "The cows of Puri were quite unlike those anywhere else. They were the best organized in India, going in single file, pausing only for a moment to collect an offering from a regular contributor before moving on. They were calculating, nimble and sleek."

Lewis: acute and witty

E X C E R P T

There was a queue at the kiosk, largely composed of tribals—some of whom, unable to cope with cash, had brought bags of rice and vegetables with which to negotiate a deal. At the centre of the display was a coloured-action photo of Miss Datta, a gigantic weight-lifter who would be representing India at the Asian Games. 'Take our products regularly,' said the wording. 'You, too, could be like this.' In Rayagada they also made excellent toys, and a kerbside vendor had lost control of a couple of lively plastic dogs which wandered into the street to be promptly kicked over by scampering goats. A wash of sheer noise flowed over this town and its car horns brayed from all quarters like the trumpets under the walls of Jericho.

Once among the tribals, Lewis is finally off the beaten track. Here, in the country's saner fringes, the traveller's observations sensitively show up the crasser extremes of male-dominance in the Indian urban mainstream. Among tribals, the women are never hideously subordinate and men less prone to corpulence and grease.

For all its exalted prose, when Lewis' publishers do their next count of his travel classics they may, like me, scratch their heads before concluding that its candidature to that status leaves room for more than a little doubt.

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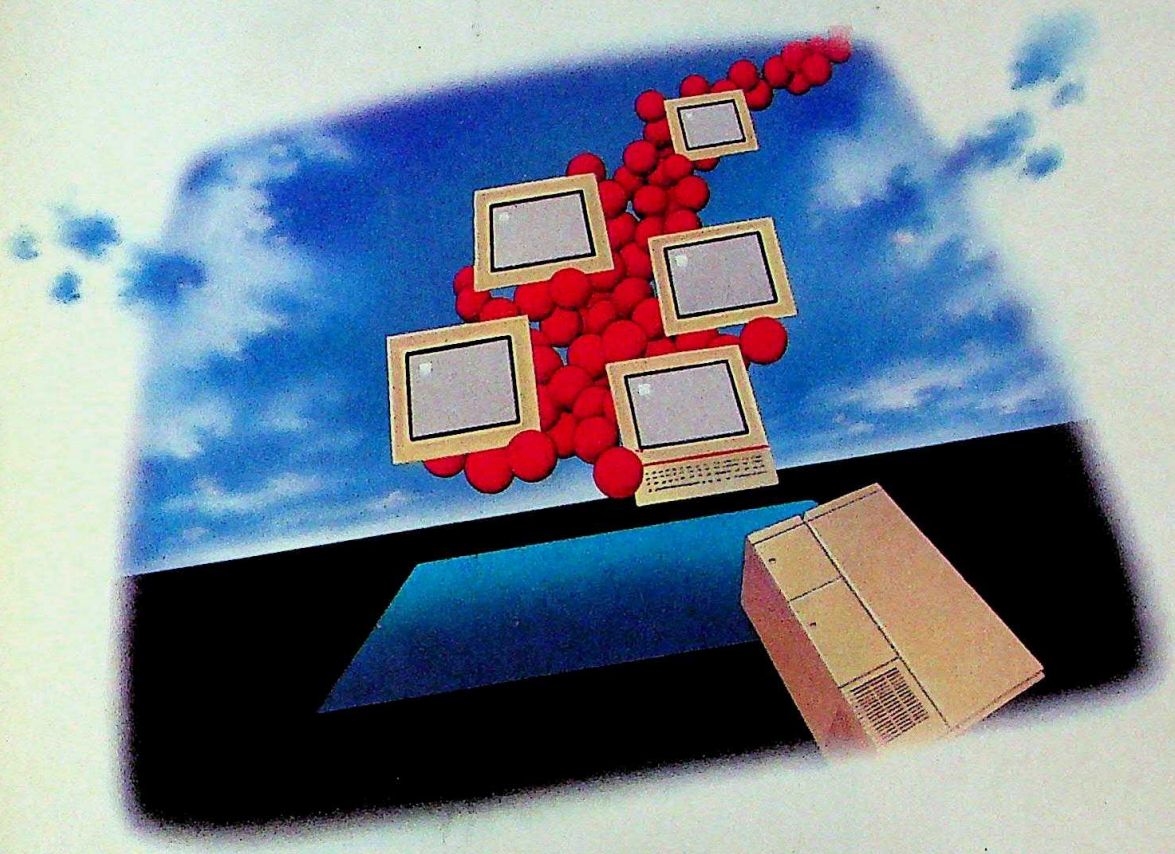

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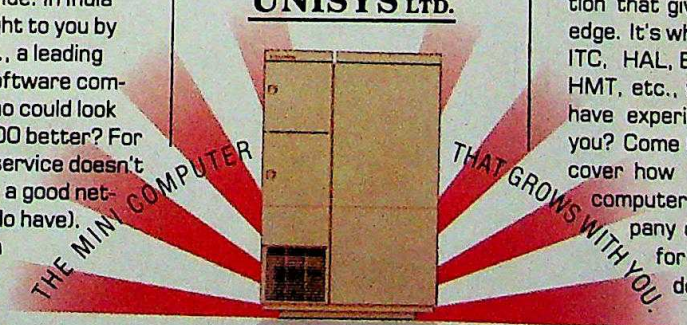

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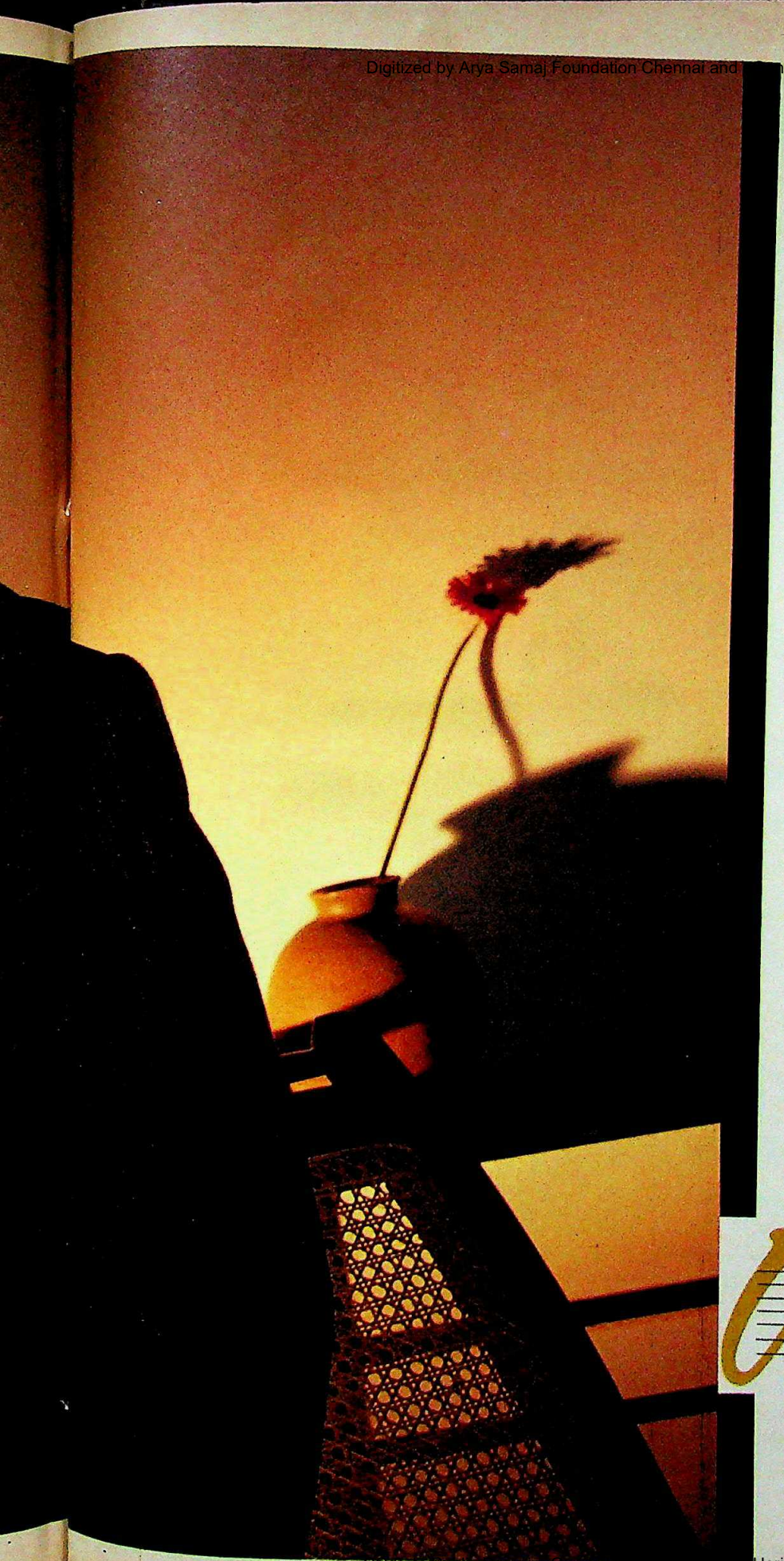

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ORISSA

Dubious Degrees

Colleges profit with suspect courses

FOR thousands of degree-hungry students, the advertisement on the billboard is irresistible. The Regional Engineering Institute Bhubaneswar dangles a much-coveted engineering degree. And the Institute of Aviation and Technology offers a tempting certificate in flying.

But few of the hundreds who flock to these schools read the fine print. The truth is: neither is recognised by any university, despite claims to the contrary. They are just some of the city's 50-odd private institutes touting unrecognised diplomas and degrees in courses ranging from subjects like aviation to beauty care.

Illustration by JAYANTO

Merely registered under the Societies Act, these institutes don't need official permission to set up shop. The Government in the last Assembly session, decided to amend the Orissa Education Act, making government approval mandatory for proprietors. But until the amendment is implemented, the institutes thrive. Admits Orissa Law Minister Narasingha Mishra: "The Act has been made but the rules have not yet been framed."

Meanwhile, the Government has been selling them prime land for a song. It virtually donated three acres in Rasoolgarh to the Institute of Management—for Rs 3. And sold a two-acre plot located next to Hotel Oberoi to Regional College of Management (RCM) for a piffling Rs 2.

Such prices aren't surprising. Many institutes have influential politicians and bureaucrats on their boards. The president of RCM's executive body is former Congress(I) MLA, Lalit Mohanty, while former chief minister J.B. Patnaik's son, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, is on its governing board.

Captain A.K. Mishra, Chief Minister Biju Patnaik's pilot during the election campaign, had no problems setting up his Institute of Aviation and Technology. Mishra boasts his "institute is one of the best in India". But their certificate isn't even recognised by the Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Asserts M.S. Raina, DGCA airworthiness officer: "We are not aware of an Institute of Aviation and Technology in the city."

With the state Government not enforcing the law, many private colleges flourish by flouting all norms.

Similarly, the RCM runs five courses of which only the tourism and travel management ones have permanent affiliation with the university. Its diploma in management studies and post graduate course in computer application is only given yearly affiliation by the university.

Also flouting rules is the La Belle Beauty Care Training Institute in Satyanagar. The land was originally allotted for a wig manufacturing plant. Instead they set up a training institute. Says J.R. Puri of La Belle: "The Government has never stood in our way."

Predictably, the institutes do brisk business. The investment is minimal. All it requires is a dingy apartment, a few benches, black boards and a few supposed instructors. And, of course, political clout. The fees are fabulous. The aviation institute charges Rs 20,000. And La Belle fees are a neat Rs 13,000 for a one-year course. Says Dr S.N. Mohanty, dean of Orissa Agricultural University: "These institutes are nothing better than ordinary business establishments."

The reason for the student rush is obvious. There are just three government-recognised colleges in Bhubaneshwar. And they have limited seats. Says Santanu Mohapatra, a computer institute student: "Beggars cannot be choosers. As the avenues are limited, we're driven to the private institutes."

Many institutes have grown into virtual education empires. The uncrowned king is P.K. Mishra, a former journalist who began with a teacher's training institute in 1986 and followed it up with the Maharshi Women's College and the Maharshi Engineering College. Next on the cards: a residential school with a substantial Rs 1-crore budget. Admits he: "I enjoy minting money." Evidently, he is not alone.

—RUBEN BANERJEE in Bhubaneswar

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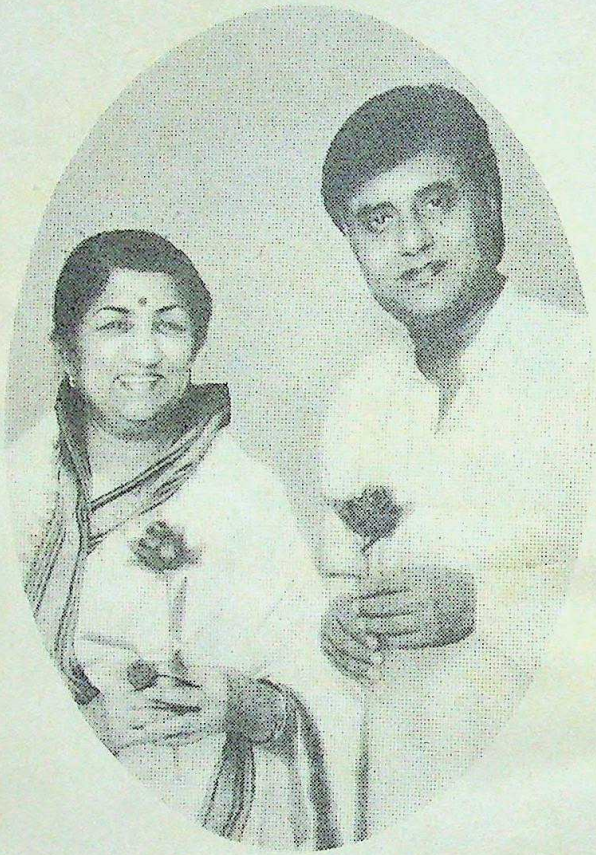

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RPG ENTERPRISES

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Books

REBUILDING RUSSIA BY ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN (Harvill; Rs 200). Russia's best-known writer does his own critical trick on the Soviet break-up, calling for private enterprise and a return to roots. Engaging stuff.

Music

ALIEN DESIRE by JASMINE

(Magnasound; Rs 45). No wonder it's stylish—the album's produced by interior decorators. But it's more than just the stylish and sexy cover. Diminutive Jasmine Kharucha has been captivating regulars at Nelson Wang's piano bar in Bombay for years. Now she rides the airwaves.

DANGEROUS by MICHAEL JACKSON (CBS; Rs 45). Sounding dangerously like recycled dance music, the superstar's much-awaited new album has little to offer beyond the controversial—and musically interesting—"Black Or White" track. Also features the fabulous voice of Macaulay Culkin, child mega-star of *Home Alone*, one of few reasons to buy this album.

THIRUVENKATAMUDAIYAAN THIRUPPALLIYEZHUCHI (Sri Venkatesa Suprabhatham in Tamil) by M.S. Subbulakshmi (HMV; Rs 28). For years, families have been waking to the sounds of the earlier Sanskrit release of the same name. The Tamil version has been rendered by the doyenne of Carnatic music, with her customary devotion and conviction. Uplifting.

Art

PARITOSH SEN (Village Gallery, New Delhi, Part I: "Instant Images", December 7-27. Part II: "Water Colours", December 28-January 18). The painter is back with a show that definitely distinguishes the men from the boys in art. The first section has a collection of playful and spontaneous sketches and drawings of both people and animals. The second part is a sadder, more introspective vision of life and situations in contemporary India. An absorbing experience, the exhibition is a definite 'not to be missed'.

ARTISTS OF SANTINIKETAN—PAST AND PRESENT (LTG Gallery, New Delhi, December 6-January 2). The past wins hands down: Nandalal Bose, Ram Kinkar Baij and Rabindranath Tagore.

CHANGING IMAGES (Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay, December 19-26). Interesting concept: juxtaposing an early work with a late one of 40 artists including A. Ramachandran, Sunil Das, Kanwal Krishna and Navjot Altaf.

SHAKTI MAIRA—PAINTINGS & SCULPTURE (Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, December 21-30; and Cymroza Gallery, Bombay, January 21-February 1). A collection of Buddhist-inspired works from this painter now settled in the US. They're basically explorations of the inner world. Interesting.

K.H. ARA (Artists' Centre, Rampart Row, Bombay, December). And now for the real stuff. Uncontroversially original, this parallel show organised by members of the Ara Trust who were provoked by the Ashish Nagpal Show, has original flower studies and nudes at a gallery the celebrated painter was associated with for several years.

MAESTRO MUSIC He's taking the *guru shishya parampara* a note further. Master flautist, Hariprasad Chaurasia, 52, is all set to launch a very special project—the Vrindaban Classical Music Centre in Bombay. The prelude will be on December 28: the all-night Garden Varelli-sponsored concert of jugalbandis by the country's best-known classical musicians in Shivaji Park. But it will only reach its crescendo when the maestro starts *riyaz* with students.

The centre will come up in Bombay's Versova suburb next year and will house a library, a sound studio, *riyaz* rooms and accommodation for visiting researchers and eight students. It will be a dream come true, says the maestro, as "students will be able to surrender themselves to music". As, he adds, "music is one way out of this mess of violence". He's hitting the right note.

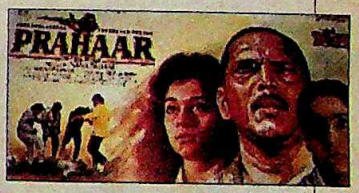
Video

OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY (Directed by Norman Jewison; Starring: Danny De Vito and Gregory Peck). Jewison's latest film looks at the mean and hungry world of Wall Street and its ruthless corporate raiders. Watchable both for Jewison's direction and De Vito's rare non-comic portrayal.

JUNGLE FEVER (Directed by Spike Lee; Starring: Wesley Snipes, Annabela and Anthony Quinn). Black director Lee's film takes a close, hard, raw look at interracial relationships in present-day America. Although thematically the same as the vintage *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, the film lacks the finesse and mature handling of the earlier classic.

Movies

PRAHAAR



(Directed by Nana Patekar; Starring: Nana Patekar, Dimple Kapadia, Madhuri Dixit, Habib Tanvir). In his directorial debut, thespian Patekar establishes himself as a film maker of consequence in this film about a major-turned-vigilante. A must-see, even if Madhuri and Dimple are only the side-shows.

SAPNON KA MANDIR (Directed by Suresh Kumar Jain; Starring: Jeetendra, Jayapradha and Kader Khan). A family drama, cloyingly sweet and sanctimonious. Heaven on earth, here, is having children, especially sons. Avoidable.

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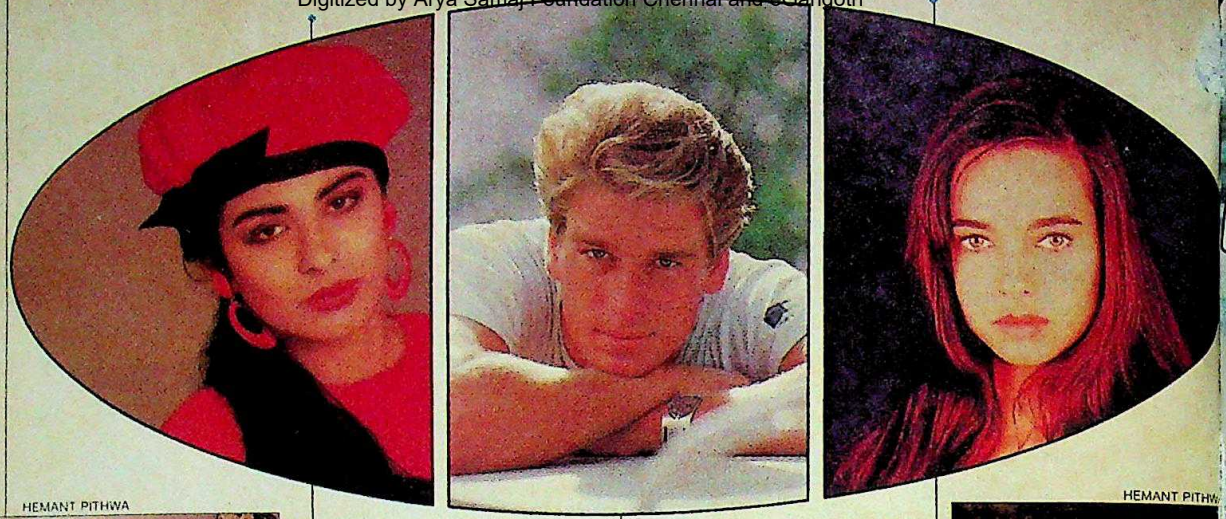
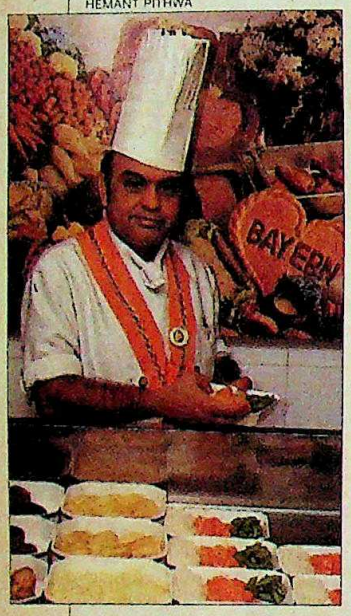


HEMANT PITHWA



Arora: nouvelle cuisine

Culinary King

◆ He is the nabob of nouvelle cuisine. Not quite the nabob of kebabs though. Instead, the chief chef of the Taj, **Satish Arora**, 44, dabbles in exotic eats like *baigan bharta* steamed in cabbage leaves. And for all his efforts Arora's just been rated one of the 20 great chefs in the world by *Members* magazine. Considering he's had people like Gorbachev, Prince Charles, Mitterand, the Agha Khan, Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi eat out of his hands—literally—no one was surprised. Except Arora himself. Said he: "My biggest passion is to play with unusual things like water chestnuts." Even the misunderstood little *karela*.

Move over caviar, the *karela*'s here.

Top Tempters

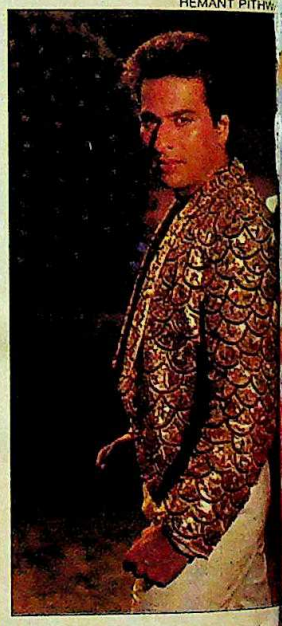
◆ First, *Fortune* had a list of those loaded with greenbacks. Now, Britain's *Tan* magazine has listed the country's top 30 "sexiest" Asians. Not surprisingly, the temptress with a Mick Jagger-like mouth; **Pamella Bordes**, figures in it. Also on the list: photographer **Karan Kapoor**, with his Greek god looks and aquamarine eyes, model **Allya Knightley** and actor **Ayub Khan Din** of *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* fame. What was the magazine's definition of sexy? According to editor Michael Tarat, it's "a combination of being good-looking, successful and a role model for other Asians". Quite a tall order, that.

Bordes, Kapoor, Knightley

New Rhythm

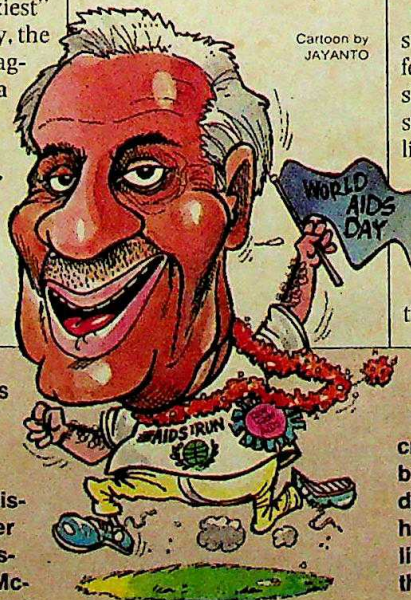
◆ Who's that boy? Doing the bump and grind, all dressed in black. It's ghazal singer **Talat Aziz**, 29, who's now playing to a different *dhun* as a hero in Mahesh Bhatt's new film *Dhun*. Aziz plays a small-town boy who comes to the big city to make it. Is it autobiographical? No, says Aziz. And it doesn't even feature what he's good at—singing ghazals. The film, he says, "comes close to the life of anyone who comes from a small town". Where does that leave his singing career? "Out, at least for the time being." Is there time for a requiem?

HEMANT PITHW



Aziz: bebop time

Cartoon by JAYANTO



Shirt Slogan

◆ It's no shirt off his back. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, **N. Janardhana Reddy** has switched to T-shirts these days. Last fortnight a slogan against AIDS blazed across his chest as he inaugurated a run to campaign against the disease. Earlier, in better spirits, the chief minister wore one with "McDowells" emblazoned on it when opening a cricket match sponsored by the liquor company. "I do it for a change and perhaps the photographers like it," quips he. It's better than saying cheese.

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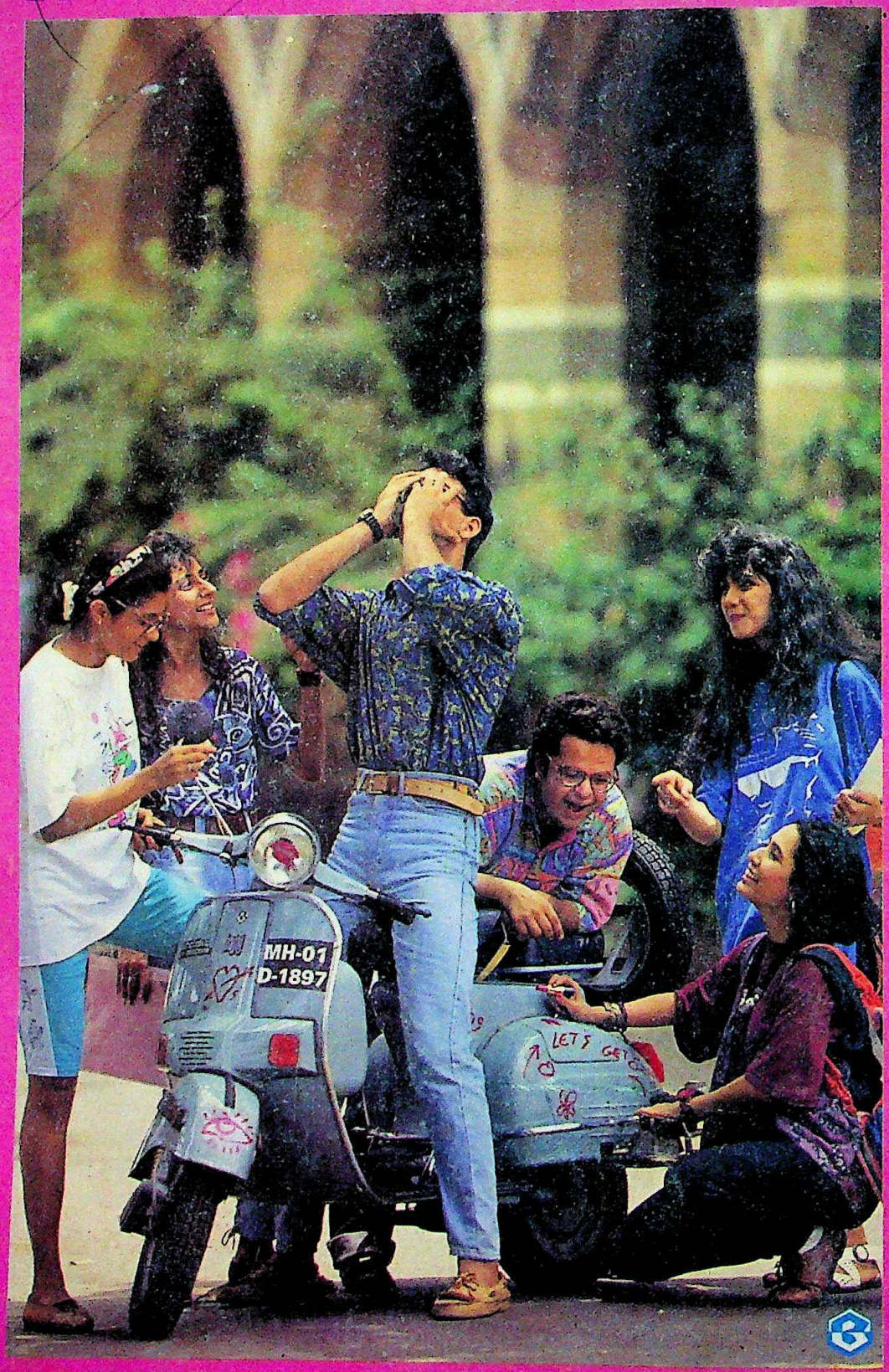
HAMARA BAJAJ



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